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CHINESE PAINTING

LEADING MASTERS AND PRINCIPLES

PART I

THE FIRST MILLENNIUM

Vol. I. Early Chinese Painting. Vol. II. The Sung Period
Vol. III. Plates

PART II

THE LATER CENTURIES

Vol. IV. The Yüan and Early Ming Masters
Vol. V. The Later Ming and Leading Ch'ing Masters
Vol. VI. Plates





Part of an illustration to the Ruru Jataka, referring to Buddha's incarnation as a Golden Gazelle.
Wall-painting of the Northern Wei period in Cave 257 at Ch'ien-fo tung, Tim-huang.

PHOTOGRAPH BY MILLARD B. BUEERS

Osvald Sirén

Chinese Painting

LEADING MASTERS AND PRINCIPLES

PART I

The First Millennium

17927

VOLUME I

EARLY CHINESE PAINTING

759.931
Sir



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Author's Preface

The present history of Chinese painting, which is an attempt to present in a form easily accessible to Western students the work and personalities of the leading masters as well as the fundamental aesthetic principles of this art, has for practical reasons been divided into two successive, though mutually independent sets or parts, called respectively: THE FIRST MILLENNIUM and THE LATER CENTURIES.

The title of the first part is, however, a rather generalizing term, one which should not be taken too literally; it refers to a span of time that in fact includes considerably more than one thousand years. The end of this period is easily fixed, because it coincides with the end of the Sung dynasty, but as to its beginning, widely differing opinions are held. Some experts have tried to trace the origin of Chinese painting to the early Bronze Age, more than a thousand years B.C., while others, who take a more restricted or technical view of the matter, are inclined to start the history of Chinese painting with the Han period or even later. They point to the fact that neither the literary sources nor the authentic remains of painting from the Han or earlier times are sufficient to give us a comprehensive idea of the various kinds of painting which possibly existed before the Han period.

This may well be true, but it is a state of things which is gradually being modified through new discoveries of tomb chambers with wall-painting and decorated objects which even though they cannot be connected with definite artistic personalities, serve to broaden our views of the artistic attainments of the early painters. The time-limit for the history

of painting in China is thus year by year pushed backward, yet on the other hand, it must be admitted that the paintings uncovered in the tombs represent a very different kind of pictorial art from that of the scroll-paintings on paper or silk which constitute the main body of what is usually understood by the term Chinese painting.

The double aim of this work, succinctly indicated in its sub-title, *Leading Masters and Principles*, and the necessity of keeping it within certain prescribed limits have naturally led to compromises which would not have been necessary in a purely historical or an essentially theoretical presentation of Chinese painting. To maintain the requisite balance between these two sides of the subject has, however, necessitated a somewhat different treatment in the earlier and the later chapters of the book; in the former, the theoretical treatises and disquisitions have been given relatively more space and importance than in the later portion of the work, because they seemed more important or necessary for a proper understanding of the art of the period than the majority of the often rather doubtful pictures, whereas the relative proportion between the authentic paintings and the literary records becomes reversed or equalized after the end of the Sung period. These somewhat shifting proportions in the character of the material in successive periods must perforce make themselves felt in the composition of a general history of Chinese painting and involve compromises or sacrifices which are painful to the author.

The difficulty is as a matter of fact more serious nowadays than it was two or three decades ago,

when I composed my earlier books on Chinese painting, because during the intervening years the attention of students and collectors has been more and more centred on the post-Sung periods. A number of important studies devoted to individual masters, schools or groups of the later periods have been published in various parts of the world, and the artistic productions of the Yüan, Ming and early Ch'ing periods have been placed on a level with the paintings of the Sung and earlier dynasties. To what extent this is justified by the artistic qualities of the pictures is a question which may here be left open; I am simply drawing attention to the increased and growing interest of students and collectors in later Chinese painting and the consequent complications and demands made on a comprehensive presentation of the subject.

It seems indeed futile to try to define what should be included in (or omitted from) a general history of Chinese painting, because the subject is so wide and many-sided, but the above remarks may offer some explanation for the inclusion of a short preliminary chapter on painting of the Han period and earlier times at the head of the historical text, though it can hardly be said to fall within the scope and limits of the specifically Chinese painting which is discussed in the general Introduction. The wall-paintings of the Han period, which in recent years have been uncovered in Northern China and Manchuria, have, indeed, from an aesthetic viewpoint little in common with the scrolls of later times, yet they are important elements in historical study, for they make us realize that Chinese painting might have developed along different lines if its early connections with spheres of Western culture had been maintained and cultivated more consistently.

In view of the general aim of this publication, which is to represent the historical development and aesthetic significance of Chinese painting to Western art-lovers, I have tried to emphasize such qualities and typical features as seemed to me most essential in contradistinction to the leading principles of Western painting. This general course, however,

could not be successfully pursued simply through a formal analysis of still existing pictures; it had also to be based on the writings and pronouncements of the artists and their literary friends, who sometimes provide a clearer indication of the intentions and essential principles of Chinese painters than might be deduced from the pictures that pass under their names. It would, indeed, be difficult for Westerners to understand the Chinese ideals and to appreciate the Chinese attitude of mind without these explanatory discourses by painters and critics; and for this reason, selections from such writings of various epochs have been included in new translations. None of these writings can be said to contain a complete or systematic theory of painting, but they all direct our attention to qualities of life and rhythm, which Chinese artists who worked in harmony with the Spirit of Nature transmitted spontaneously by their creations.

The important modifications which in recent years have taken place in the discussion and appreciation of Chinese paintings and which are well known to students who have been active in the field for more than a quarter of a century, have certainly contributed to make the task of the historian more complex and exacting. The limits have been extended both in time and place (as stated above), the relative homogeneity of the material, which seemed to prevail in the days of Fenollosa and Giles, has been shattered, and the danger of basing aesthetic opinions on reproductions and the attractive publications produced in China and Japan some thirty years ago, has been brought home to students and collectors with growing force.

This was evidenced to me quite recently with irresistible force during my studies of a large number of important pictures from the former Palace Museum collection, now at Formosa. The opportunities offered there for a closer scrutiny of many famous pictures hitherto known to me only in reproductions, served to open my eyes to qualities and imperfections not so easily observable in reproductions, but nevertheless decisive for the

actual dates and attributions of the pictures. The problems and impressions which I have in mind are too complex for demonstration at this place, but here, for instance, may be mentioned in passing a large group of landscape-paintings which have been traditionally ascribed to masters active in the tenth century (*i.e.* from Ching Hao to Kuo Hsi), and much admired as representatives of the great school of landscape-painting that existed at the beginning of the Sung period. In many instances their magnificent designs make them truly impressive, but very few indeed of these famous works were, in my opinion, executed before the Yuan or early Ming period. To demonstrate this in detail is obviously not possible in the absence of any reproductions, nor is it possible for me to introduce any readjustments in a volume which is already in print. But this general impression arrived at through a careful study of an important group of paintings may be of interest to other students who have been confronted with a similar situation. They are unavoidable in the history of Chinese painting, and I believe that with growing knowledge and experience we shall all be obliged to admit that we have often been led astray by traditional opinions supported by the seals and inscriptions of emperors and connoisseurs, and equally by the long-standing habit of accepting verdicts based on reproductions as substitutes for those based on originals.

I see no way out of this alluring jungle, where we sometimes have lost our way, except by increasing our efforts to establish closer contact with the original works of the Chinese painters. The question how this is to be done, is one which every student must answer for himself. I can only say that my recognition of the imperative necessity of establishing such contacts has led me to sustained and careful studies in Far Eastern collections (beside those in Western countries). And I have to admit that even now, materially and intellectually, I am still at the beginning of the journey and always ready for another start.

For the benefit of those who are setting out on a

similar course of intellectual and material adventures, I have added to the historical (and somewhat traditional) account a kind of skeleton guide under the name of Annotated Lists, in which the student will find about 1400 painters mentioned with references to historical sources and to their works. The latter are listed under short descriptive titles to which often are appended letters or pointers indicating their probable degree of authenticity. These pointers are, whenever possible, the result of the compiler's observations on the originals, but there are exceptions to the rule and a number of cases in which the pointers are left out. The Annotated Lists therefore, as explained in the Introduction, should not be regarded as an all-inclusive scheme of classification, but rather be interpreted as an attempt to offer suggestions to the student which may be useful in his search for authentic works by certain painters.

This search is the very gist of the matter, it warms the heart, opens the eyes, increases the experience, and arouses the aesthetic sensibility which, after all, must be admitted as a final authority in our estimate of the artistic importance of a work of art. It gives us joy and lead sometimes to conviction, but that is while we are still on the road and not yet sunk in afterthought or the scholarly labours of demonstrating our conviction to others. These mean as a rule more work, more doubts and more complications than were expected, particularly if the results of the researches are to be made accessible to others in print.

* * *

The present work could not have been brought to the degree of relative completion in which it is now presented without the co-operation, active help and good advice of a number of friends, assistants, and museum officials in various parts of the world. Those who have contributed in particular to the work on the Annotated Lists are mentioned in the Introduction to this part of the publication, but among the others who have been more concerned with the general programme of the book, its literary form, the control of the Chinese translations and the supply

of the illustrative material, the following persons and institutions should be recorded with thanks:

Professor Wilfrid H. Wells, the indefatigable censor of my literary English, who furthermore, through his familiarity with Chinese painting and individual approach to the subject, has been an inestimable, though geographically distant companion in my literary travails during the last five years.

Professor Chang Hsin-chang, who acted for a while as my assistant in Sweden and whose excellent knowledge of English as well as of Chinese, and special interest in the history of painting and aesthetics, made him particularly fitted to control the translations of the theoretical writings.

Dr. Erich Zürcher of Leyden, who was delegated by Professor Hulswé to act as my assistant during some months in 1954, at a time when I was mainly occupied with the study of the Sung period.

Dr. Shimada Shujiro of Kyoto, who during my visits to Japan in 1951, 1954, and 1956 was a frequent companion and excellent adviser in regard to Chinese paintings in Japanese collections. His name should really be recorded with special gratitude in connexion with the Annotated Lists to which he contributed much valuable information.

The specialists of Chinese painting, connoisseurs, collectors and museum officials who in recent years have shown an interest in my preparatory work and offered their help in the form of opportunities for study and the supply of photographs are spread over three continents and too numerous to be completely recorded at this place, but some of the most important institutions, centres of study, and individual experts in various countries should here be mentioned.

In China: 1. The members of the Union of Chinese Artists who sponsored my stay in Peking in 1954 and through their learned representative, Professor Wang Hsün, furnished me with a selection of photographs of paintings exhibited in Hui-hua kuan, and again, in October 1955, with some excellent photographs of paintings in tombs of the Han period and in the cave-temples at Tun-huang.

2. The authorities in charge of the Palace Museum collection, now in Tai-chung, who actually gave me the best opportunities for studies of paintings that I ever have had in any public collection in China; they also supplied me with a number of interesting photographs. My thanks for these good services are due to Dr. George K. C. Yeh, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Wang Shih-chieh, Dr. Lo Hsia-lun, Dr. Han Li-wu, Mr. Chuang Yen, and Mr. T'an Tan-chiung and also to their staff of willing helpers at Tai-chung.

In Japan: During my repeated visits to Japan I have received continuous support and assistance in my researches from a great number of public institutions and private collectors of various categories. The first place among these should be accorded to some of the old Buddhist temples where Chinese pictures are still carefully preserved and on occasion are made accessible to students. No one who has enjoyed the friendly hospitality in Koto-in and Ryuko-in or seen an exhibition of Mu-ch'i's masterpieces in the main temple of Daitokuji, will forget the atmosphere of meditative repose and spiritual attainment prevailing at these places, nor can he forget the impressive formality with which precious pictures are unrolled in the great Shingon temples such as Toji or Gion-in in Kyoto. These are memories provoking gratitude.

It should, however, also be remembered that the pictures which belong to public or quasi-public museums are not displayed on the walls as in Western museums, but, with rare exceptions, wrapped up in silks and carefully locked in series of lacquered boxes smelling of camphor and sandalwood. To see these pictures requires proper preparations on the part of responsible officials. Such is the case in the large art-museums in Tokyo, Kyoto and Osaka, where hundreds of paintings are preserved, and also in the minor quasi-private collections such as the Seikado and the Nezu Museum in Tokyo, Yurinkan in Kyoto, the Hakone Museum and others. The good help and willingness extended to the foreign student at most of these institutions

have repeatedly given cause for feelings of sincere gratitude. I would also like to include in this category of helpful institutions the Institute of Art Research in Tokyo, from which I have obtained a number of interesting photographs and valuable information about the whereabouts of certain paintings in Japan.

Among the many private collectors who made their Chinese paintings accessible to me for closer study should be mentioned in particular Marquis S. Asano, and Marquis Inouye; Mr. K. Sumitomo in Oiso, Mr. K. Takashima in Kugenuma, Mr. K. Yamaguchi and Mr. K. Kurokawa in Ashiya; Dr. T. Moriya, Mr. S. Hashimoto and the regretted Professor Ch. Ogawa in Kyoto, Mr. T. Nakamura and Mr. Mayuyama in Tokyo, and Mr. Umezawa and Mr. Saito in Kamakura – a list that easily might be continued with dozens of other names, and yet remain incomplete, because my connections with the art-collections in Japan started nearly forty years ago and have been continued through the decades in spite of the disturbing vicissitudes that so many of the old Japanese collections have passed through in recent years.

In U.S.A.: It may not be necessary to enumerate here all the American institutions and their officials who during the last decade have become of fundamental importance for students of Chinese painting. They are all nowadays well known, whether in Washington, New York, Boston, or in Cleveland, Cincinnati, St. Louis, Indianapolis, Chicago, Kansas City or Honolulu, and most of them are rapidly growing under the expert guidance of specialists in the Oriental field. No history of Chinese painting could be composed today without active co-operation in the form of photographs and critical information from these institutions. The author remains under deep and lasting obligation to the leading officials at all these museums, not only for the supply of excellent photographs but also for much valuable information and stimulating discussions regarding Chinese paintings in their collections. Let me mention in particular Mr. Laurence Sickman in Kansas

City, Mr. Archibald G. Wenley in Washington, Mr. K. Tomita and Mr. Tseng Hsien-ch'i in Boston, Dr. Ashwin Lippe in New York, and Mr. R. P. Griffing and Professor and Mrs. Ecker in Honolulu. The private collectors and art-experts in America (and elsewhere) who have contributed most directly to the formation of the Lists are mentioned in the Introduction to that part of the present publication, but I would nevertheless like to record also at this place my obligation to the Chinese experts in New York as well as in China with whom I have passed stimulating hours of study and conversation. Prominent among these experts were Mr. Chang Ts'ung-yü in Peking and Mr. Chuang Yen in Taichung.

Among the European collectors and connoisseurs who during the years have shared with me some of their knowledge and experience of Chinese painting and supplied me with photographs, should be mentioned in particular my friends in Lugano, M. Jean-Pierre Dubosc and Dr. Vannotti, whose company I have enjoyed repeatedly; furthermore, Mr. Bernard Berenson in Settignano, who presented me with excellent photographs; Mlle. Madeleine David and other former colleagues in the Musée Guimet in Paris; Dr. Victoria Contag of Shanghai days and later; Mr. Basil Gray and Mr. John Ayres in London, who kindly undertook to compose captions for some of the plates in my absence, and Mr. Peter Swan in Oxford. My thanks for pleasant encounters along the endless roads winding across the fields of Chinese art are due to them all.

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INTRODUCTION

I

The Beginnings of Chinese Painting according to the Early Chroniclers.

Hsieh Ho's Six Principles of Painting

PAINTING AS an independent art had existed no doubt since very early times in China, but our knowledge about the earliest forms of this art is hardly sufficient to allow definite conclusions as to its beginnings and initial significance. From the way painting is described by some of the old chroniclers, it may be concluded that, to begin with, it was executed mainly for moral and ceremonial purposes rather than for purely decorative or aesthetic ends. Chang Yen-yüan, the well-known art-historian of the ninth century, reports in *Li-tai ming-hua chi* (A.D. 845) some of the traditional views on this art and gives a short account of the early development of painting. He writes in the first chapter of his treatise as follows:

"Painting perfects culture and promotes right relationships; it exhausts all the divine transformations (in nature); it fathoms the abstruse and the subtle, attaining everything accomplished by the Six (classic) Arts, and makes its circuit with the four seasons. It originated spontaneously from nature and not as a result of human endeavour."

The author then refers to some of the old traditions regarding the first appearance of pictorial writing in the time of legendary rulers such as Fu Hsi and Huang-ti, and to these stories he adds the following remarks, no doubt borrowed from earlier writers:

"At that time (i.e. in pre-historic times) writing and painting were still substantially the same and not as yet differentiated. Regulations for pictograms had been introduced, but they were as yet quite summary. There was nothing for transmitting ideas, and

so writing came about, and as there was nothing by which shapes could be made visible, painting came about. All in accordance with the intentions of Heaven and Earth and the ancient Sages."

The view that painting had the same origin as writing and moreover similar ends, whether ceremonial, religious or purely practical, is repeated several times in various connexions; it is, so to speak, the central thesis of this first chapter of *Li-tai ming-hua chi*. The pictures which the author had in mind seem to have been mainly of an illustrative kind, serving as records of historical events and characters. Chang writes that, according to *Chou-li*, "the sons of noblemen and princes were taught six kinds of script, the third consisting of pictorial signs with the same meaning as paintings. From this may be known that though writing and painting had different names, they were substantially the same thing."

This sweeping statement refers apparently not only to pictograms, which could be classified as writing no less than as paintings, but also to the fact that the two arts were fundamentally akin in so far as they both could be used for expressing moral ideas and practical concepts. Some hints about the further evolution of painting are then given by the author as follows:

"When we arrive at the time of Yü, i.e. the reign of the emperor Shun (c.2317-2208), painting became quite explicit; variegated colours were then gradually applied, and the pictures became more like the objects. There was a great expansion of ritual and music which promoted the development of culture.

Consequently men could bow deferentially (to their superiors); the country was at peace, and literature and poetry made great progress."

In order further to define and illustrate the origin of painting, Chang Yen-yüan refers to some well-known encyclopaedic works of the late Chou, the Han, and the Wei dynasties, in which the term *hua* (to paint or painting) is variously explained, i.e. as follows:

"Kuang-ya says: To paint is (to produce) likeness. Erh-ya says: To paint is to give form. Shuo-wên says: The character *hua* (to paint) is (derived from) the raised paths between fields, it depicts the boundary lines around paddy-fields and is therefore itself a drawing. Shih-ming says: To paint is to lay on colours so as to represent things."

The most interesting of the definitions quoted above seems to us the one from *Shuo-wên*, which (though rather vaguely) refers to drawings of paddy-fields. Such drawings may have had some likeness with maps, a correspondence which also may be observed in Chinese maps of later ages in which details such as mountains, raised paths, and the like are added on in relief with some degree of pictorial illusion.

In addition to such map-like drawings, Chang Yen-yüan, however, also mentions certain other examples of primitive pictorial representations. In connexion with the trend of thought transmitted in the above quotations from the encyclopaedic works, he writes:

"Consequently the goblins and demons could be recognized from the engravings on tripods and bells, and gods and evil forces could be understood. Designs on pennants served to make rules and measures clear and thus to perfect the regulations of the country."

Of the objects here referred to by Chang Yen-yüan only the bronze vessels have to some extent survived, owing to their burial in the earth, whereas the colourful pennants with symbolic designs, made for the proclamation of rules and regulations, have long since perished. The writer's terse manner of

expression may, however, cause some hesitation as to the kind of "engravings (*k'o*) on tripods and bells" that he had in mind when characterizing them as means to make goblins and demons recognizable and to reveal spirits and evil influences. He may have had in view simply primitive pictograms or highly conventionalized zoomorphic motifs (such as *t'ao-t'ieh*, etc), or perhaps been thinking of some more naturalistic representations of human beings, animals, and monsters which are to be seen on certain bronze vessels of the late Chou period. Various interpretations of the above expressions are possible, and it would carry us too far to enter here into a closer discussion of these possibilities. It may be enough to take note of the general idea that some of the graphic decorations on the old bronze vessels were considered as illustrations of a preparatory stage in the development of painting and consequently also as examples of the intimate connexion between writing and painting. Whatever degree of archaic simplification or decorative transformation was characteristic of these graphs, symbols or figures, they all had their meaning conveyed through form and composition. They could thus with more or less reason be considered as confirmations of the traditional theory regarding the common origin of writing and painting, even though their connexion with painting as a form of creative brush-work was very remote. To Chang Yen-yüan they were relics of a period when painting, properly speaking, had not as yet come of age.

In the following excursion the author dwells on more advanced forms of figure painting dating from the Han period. He transmits the information about the paintings of loyal and filial men which decorated the pavilion on the Cloud Terrace (*Yün-t'ai*), built by the emperor Ming-ti (58-75), and those of brave and meritorious officials in the Unicorn Pavilion (*Ch'i-lin Ko*), erected by rulers of the former Han dynasty. These pictures were all done with a moral purpose, because "to contemplate good serves to warn against evil, and the sight of evil serves to make men long for wisdom". He

quotes two prominent early authors, Lu Chi (261-303) and Ts'ao Chih (192-232), in support of this view of painting as a moral force; the following pronouncements by the latter may serve as examples of their estimates:

"When one sees pictures of the Three Kings and the Five Emperors one cannot but look at them with respect and veneration, and when one sees pictures of the *San chi* (the last degenerate rulers of the Hsia, Shang and Chou dynasties) one cannot but feel sad. When one sees pictures of rebels and usurpers of the throne, one cannot but gnash one's teeth. When one sees pictures of great sages and men of high principles, one cannot but forget one's meals, . . . From this we may realize that paintings served as moral examples or mirrors of conduct."

Chang Yen-yüan does not offer any closer descriptions of these pictures, but from the context and expressions such as *fên-hui* (white powder and bright colouring) it seems evident that what he had in mind were mainly wall-paintings executed on a carefully prepared plaster surface according to a technique also known from painted tomb-tiles of the Han period. If we may draw some conclusions from Chang's presentation of the situation, the popularity of these wall-paintings depended less on their formal or decorative characteristics than on the moral influence that they were supposed to exercise and which made them fitted not only for memorial halls of the imperial palaces but also for schools and other public buildings. This was the kind of painting that apparently flourished most abundantly during the two Han dynasties and the period of the Three Kingdoms (221-265), and there can be little doubt, to judge by other relics surviving from the same period, that they were distinguished by a truly monumental style. Most of them seem to have been anonymous works, like Buddhist wall-paintings of later ages. Chang Yen-yüan does not attach any artists' names to them, though he records, in another chapter, some traditions about a few painters active in the Han period. But their position

in the history of Chinese painting seems rather hypothetical and detached from the scanty remains of Han painting still existing.

The earliest painters of definite individual character recorded by Chang as milestones and initiators in the history of Chinese painting, properly speaking, are Ts'ao Pu-hsing, Wei Hsieh, Ku K'ai-chih and Lu T'an-wei (active between the middle of the third and the end of the fifth century). The two last particularly, Ku and Lu, have ever since been mentioned by Chinese historians as the first fully accomplished masters, or the venerable founders of the art of painting in China. Chang Yen-yüan places them in "the most ancient epoch" and says that, though their pictures "expressed simple ideas in an unaffected way", they were "beautiful and true".

The next period, according to his chronological scheme, was "the middle ancient", and the pictures of that time were "refined and delicate: most graceful". Among the leading masters should be mentioned Chang Sêng-yü, Chan Tzû-ch'ien and Chêng Fa-shih, who were all active in the sixth century. Yet these painters are hardly more than the door-openers to the hall of fame reserved for the great masters of the early part of the T'ang period, whose pictures were "brilliant and luminous, approaching perfection".

Chang Yen-yüan's chronological scheme for the development of early Chinese painting has a considerable historical interest as a summary of the traditional views on this matter, but it can hardly be taken as a characterization of the successive stages in the development of this art based on actual study of the respective works. Most of these had perished already about the middle of the ninth century, when Chang wrote his treatise. He was thus to no small extent obliged to fall back on earlier records in composing his scheme.

The most important among these earlier writers on whom Chang Yen-yüan depended for information were Hsieh Ho and Yao Tsui, of the fifth and sixth centuries respectively. The former, who was a

portrait painter, wrote his *Ku hua p'in lu* shortly before 300, and the latter composed his comment to this, under the name of *Hsü hua p'in*, fifty years later. Turning first to Yao Tsui's treatise, we find that he speaks in somewhat the same terms as Chang Yen-yüan about the common origin of painting and writing and also about the wall-paintings of the Han period. His general ideas about painting are best expressed in the Introduction, from which the following paragraphs may be quoted here: "The marvels of painting are so great that they cannot be fully explained in words. Although the essentials have been transmitted from antiquity, the stylistic refinements have changed in accordance with the conditions of recent times. The numberless images stored in the bosoms of painters have been rendered after a thousand years with the tip of the brush. Thus fairies and spirits were displayed on the 'Nine Towers', and sages and virtuous men in (the) large paintings on the walls of (the) schools at the four gates (of the cities). In the Yün Ko (i.e. the Cloud Pavilion of Han Wu-ti) there were paintings which inspired reverence, and in the palace apartments pictures of tribute-bearers from distant lands. But all these far away works can no longer be completely traced. Yet there are still pictures by men who are long gone and dead, but only those who have acquired wide learning and have seen a great deal can distinguish the coarse from the fine, avoid the traps and finally arrive at their reason. As things grow worse and then improve, so men pass through periods of flourishing and decay. Some reach great fame at an early age, some only after they have passed into middle age; what goes before and what follows after are mutually dependent, and superior and inferior qualities are always mixed."

The author then goes on to oppose Hsieh Ho's somewhat critical presentation of the great master Ku K'ai-chih (as will be shown in a following chapter) and some other early painters, his purpose being to complete, and possibly correct, Hsieh Ho's treatise. He characterizes painting as an art which is not limited to the rendering of visible shapes.

The essentials must be grasped beyond these. Painting and writing form two different currents from the same source, or, as said in *I-ching*, "speech is rendered visible by means of visible forms".

Hsieh Ho's treatise *Ku hua-p'in lu* which, as said above, was written at the very end of the fifth century, is a far more systematic and comprehensive attempt to create something like a theoretical basis for the evaluation of painting and to classify a number of the most prominent old painters. It consists of two parts, i.e. a theoretical introduction in which he formulates certain general principles or fundamental conditions for painting, and a somewhat summary classification of twenty-seven painters arranged in six classes, but there is not a very close or complete correspondence between the two parts.

Hsieh Ho's enumeration and characterizations of a certain number of old painters are hardly more important than the corresponding parts of Yao Tsui's treatise and need not detain us in this connexion, but his introductory notes have gradually acquired a very broad historical interest as the earliest still existing formulation of the essentials of Chinese painting. They have been quoted and discussed by a great number of Eastern and Western experts during more than fifteen centuries and have made Hsieh Ho's name one of the best known in Chinese art-history. Yet these principles or theoretical ideas were certainly not his inventions; he does not claim to be their originator, but says on the contrary that he has made it clear that these formulae existed before his time. They may as a matter of fact be free quotations from earlier writers whose works have not survived. Hsieh Ho's personal merit may thus be rather that of a skilful transmitter or expounder of traditional ideas than that of a great creative writer or artist, but there can be no doubt that he has rendered a great service to Far Eastern history of art through his formulation of the so-called Six Principles, which thenceforth became an undercurrent running through all discussions of

Chinese painting. The text in the introductory comments may be rendered as follows:¹

"The classification of painters (here proposed) is based on the merits and demerits of a whole crowd of painters. There is not one among those who draw pictures who does not voice some warning against evil, or illustrate the rise and fall (of rulers), thus showing as in a mirror clear and silent records of thousands of years when the pictures are unrolled. Although there are six essentials in painting, a single master has rarely combined them all, yet from ancient to modern times there have always been painters skilled in one (or other) of them. What are these six essentials?

The first: Reverberation of the life-breath; that is, the creation of movement.

The second: Bone-method; that is, the (proper) use of the brush.

The third: Reflection of (To conform with) the objects; that is, the depiction of forms.

The fourth: Deference to types; that is, the application of colours.

The fifth: The layout of the design; that is, the arrangement of positions.

The sixth: Transmission and perpetuation; that is, the copying of (old) models.

"Only Lu T'an-wei and Wei Hsieh combined all these (points) properly. There have always been skilful and clumsy examples; artistic ability is not a matter of ancient or modern periods. Relying on old and modern (records), I have now respectfully established this classification, regulating it according to precedence. The information transmitted about it (*i.e.* the art of painting) is not very extensive because, according to tradition, painting originated from Divine Beings and Sages, and no one has ever heard or seen them."

The reason why Hsieh Ho's Six Principles or essentials in painting have been subject to such far-reaching and frequent discussions is evidently connected with their very terse and laconic formulation, which has permitted varying interpretations, particularly when translated into foreign languages,

but also at the hands of native critics. It would carry us far beyond the limits of the present introductory remarks to enter here into an account of the various interpretations published in Western languages, and it would hardly serve the purpose of giving a closer or more exact definition of Hsieh Ho's ideas.

The translations offered above – suggested by William Acker's systematic analysis of the Chinese text – must here suffice for a general appreciation of the ideas transmitted by Hsieh Ho for the benefit of students and critics of painting. They were evidently intended to serve as a kind of theoretical summary or foundation for a discussion of the principal elements of painting, though it must be admitted that neither Hsieh Ho nor the succeeding critics refer systematically to these principles in their evaluations of single painters or pictures. As a matter of fact, we rarely meet with any direct or indirect references to the third, fourth, fifth or sixth principle (as here formulated), whereas the first principle is often quoted as a measure for appreciation, and the second, referring to the brush-work, is mentioned as a sort of instrumental complement to the first. Consequently, our main interest will be centred on the first and the second, while the others seem sufficiently self-evident, in spite of a certain vagueness, to be understood without further comments.

Before we enter into a discussion of this first element, which contains the keynote to the whole system, it may be pointed out that the others refer mainly to the painter's professional and technical activity, his materials and his mode of work and study. There is little room for misinterpretations of their essential meaning, even though the translations

¹ As may be realized from the above remarks, there are a number of varying translations of *Ku hua-p'in li* into modern languages, English, French, German, etc., but they should not detain us here. The new translation offered here was made after I had had the privilege of consulting the translation by William Acker, still in manuscript (though made fifteen years ago) and now, I understand, in course of publication. Far superior to any preceding attempt, it has been of great importance to me, though I have taken the liberty of deviating from it in certain respects. These deviations are the result of my efforts to bring out the meaning, as I understand it, more clearly, and not actuated by any philological considerations.

may vary to some extent. The decisive importance of the brush-work is clearly indicated in the second point by the term "bone-method", a term sometimes used for characterizing a firm and energetic style of writing. It is easier to imagine than to explain its application to painting, but it evidently implies a warning against a slack or sloppy brush, and a demand for the kind of strokes that may serve as constructional supports, not only by their firmness, but also because they are replete with reverberations of the life-breath.

The third and fourth points refer to the painter's dependence on models from life, the necessity to absorb them completely and "reflect" them in paintings which are true to nature in form as well as in colour, i.e. what might be called pictorial characterization.

The fifth point refers to the planning or layout of the design, which in a wider sense may also be said to include the very important element often called "spacing". In other words, the solid and empty parts of the composition have to be properly arranged with a view to the effect of space and harmonious balance. The final advice is a reference to the age-old road of Chinese painters, the continuous study and copying of the old masters. The fact that it was well tried and established already in the fifth century indicates that important masters had been active during the preceding centuries.

It may be noted that the manner of expression by which Hsieh Ho conveys these various axioms or apothegms for painters (as well as his Introduction) seems to reveal that the essential points are taken over from earlier writers, but in transmitting them Hsieh Ho adds to each point two words of his own to explain and complete the formula. As appears in our translation each formula consists of four characters, of which the two first give, so to speak, the gist of the matter, and the two second serve to explain or illustrate the essential ideas. After these four characters follow in the Chinese reprints of Hsieh Ho's programme the two characters "*shih yeh*", meaning here as in many similar contexts "that

is", and pointing to the following two characters as equivalents to or explanations of the first half of the phrase. The Six Principles are all formed according to the same syntactical pattern, and it seems thus that Hsieh Ho has built up his system of the so-called Six Principles by combining six short terms or definitions, formulated by earlier writers, with six equally short explanatory additions to these. The essential, primary definitions would thus be: 1. Reverberation of the life-breath; 2. Bone-method; 3. Conformity with the objects; 4. Deference to types; 5. The layout of design; 6. Transmission and perpetuation.

The second half of these terms in each case explains more or less the import of the first half; thus the reverberation of the life-breath is attained by creating movement; the bone-method is the result of the proper use of the brush; for the reflection of objects, forms must be depicted; to accord with differences of type or class, may be a matter of proper colouring; the layout of the design is done by arranging the positions of the figures and objects; to transmit and perpetuate, is to copy old models.¹

Certain modifications are indeed possible in the formulation of these explanatory translations (those offered above may not be in every respect the most satisfactory), but by the proposed division of the sentences according to their syntactical composition, the essential significance is brought out more clearly than when the terms are read as continuous sentences of four characters, as has been done usually. The main reason for the traditional way of reading and the consequent attempts to explain these terms has probably been Chang Yen-yüan's rather incomplete and arbitrary way of quoting Hsieh Ho in *Li-tai ming-hua chi*, to wit: he leaves out the ending words, *shih yeh*, and thus modifies the sentences in a way which blurs their composition and original meaning without altering the significance of the words. In the following, in order to avoid confusion, for instance, when quoting from

¹ The lack of an English equivalent to the Chinese expressions is most disturbing under point four, which refers to the characterization of different classes of figures or species of objects, particularly by adding appropriate colours.

Chang Yen-yüan, we shall stick to Hsieh Ho's original terminology (as we have rendered it in English) and try to fit his trend of thought into the explanatory discussions of later critics.

There will be many occasions in later chapters to return to the subject of Hsieh Ho's principles and particularly to discuss the philosophical and aesthetic implications of *ch'i yün, shêng tung*, the first and foremost of these conditions or elements of painting, and we shall therefore at this place limit ourselves to a few words regarding the composition of the term. The expression *ch'i* signifies, as is well known, the universal breath which animates everything in nature – including human beings. It is not an abstract concept, but an actual phenomenon, like the breathing of living beings, and the words "spirit" or "spiritual" are indeed misleading, unless qualified or explained.

It may, however, be remembered that according to modern science there is no definite dividing line between "matter" and "spirit", but a gradual or mutual approach leading to what may popularly be called a dissolution of "matter" into "force", "movement" or "spirit", a fact worth remembering when we are trying to find an equivalent to the Chinese fundamental conception of a universal breath manifested in material forms. It is not produced or infused by an extra-cosmic God or spiritual beings, but the actual pulse or breath manifested in innumerable phenomena of the material world. It is akin to Tao and also to the Confucian Spirit of Heaven and Earth, two traditional correspondences of Chinese philosophy, which sometimes are fused in the same symbolic concept.

The second character, *yün*, is the Chinese expression for resonance, reverberation, or harmonious consonance. It is often used in poetic compositions in which certain parts are correlated. When combined with *ch'i*, as in the phrase under discussion, it apparently signifies the reverberation of the universal life-breath, or a vitalizing force (corresponding to the *jiva* of Hindu philosophy), which becomes evident in a painting through a suggestion of move-

ment, not necessarily motorial movement, but something that vibrates as a life-giving breath through all elements of nature. It becomes the actual thrill in a work of art, the element by which the creative impetus is transmitted. *Ch'i-yün* is thus all-pervading, but it must be grasped and transmitted by the painter in every instance and expressed through pictorial symbols as indicated in the definitions of the five following elements. Later Chinese critics who have ventured explanations of *ch'i yün* mostly describe it as a subjective quality, something appertaining to the creative genius of the painter, a thing that cannot be acquired or mastered through training or by study of the phenomena of the objective world. "It is secretly blended with the soul; one does not know how, yet it is there", writes the Sung critic Kuo Jo-hsü. It is inborn in the painter as a gift from Heaven and grows in silence like a flower, resistant to all attempts to force or constrain it. In order to visualize and express it the painter must, so to speak, consciously enter into the things or the scenes that he is going to represent. He must make them convincing not only outwardly, i.e. in shape and colour, but also inwardly, significant or alive with the thrill of the life-breath – a mysterious process to which we shall have occasion to return repeatedly in our study of later Chinese painters and theoreticians.

The fundamental importance and various implications of Hsieh Ho's canons cannot be realized without some knowledge of the theoretical discussions which were carried on in China all through the ages, but it would be premature here to attempt an account of these problems. We will simply add, by way of introduction, a few words regarding Chang Yen-yüan's contribution to the subject. He was the most important of the early expounders, and though he wrote at the end of the T'ang period, he evidently transmitted ideas and viewpoints of much earlier date (just as he did in his above-quoted statements on the origin of painting). In the chapter devoted to the Discussion of the Six Principles of Painting he writes as follows:

"From days of old, painters have rarely been able to combine all the principles. Often, however, in ancient pictures, likeness of shapes is altered and yet the structure and life-breath are enhanced. That the art of painting may be sought beyond the likeness of shapes is difficult to explain to common people. The pictures of today may possess likeness of shapes, but the reverberation of the life-breath is not manifest in them. In trying to grasp (or give) the reverberation of the life-breath, one may also obtain formal likeness."

After a short historical digression regarding the relative skill and importance of some of the earliest painters, the author returns to the consideration of the essential elements with the following remarks: "In representing objects one must give the likeness of shapes; but the shapes must all have bone-method and life-breath. Bone-method, life-breath and the likeness of shapes have all their roots (are all implicit) in the ideas, but they depend on the brush (for expression). Therefore those who are skilled in painting are also good in writing."

Though the paragraph quoted is mainly a comment on the second and third principles, referring to brushwork and likeness of shape, Chang Yen-yüan does not miss the opportunity once more to underline the close relation between painting and writing which, as we have seen, was one of his favourite theses. He then goes on to describe how all sorts of things such as palace-ladies, horses and pavilions, painted at different periods, look quite different, owing to changing modes rather than to any lack of naturalness in the representations. He points out, furthermore, that buildings, stones, carriages, utensils and the like can be represented perfectly without any life-breath, whereas phantoms and human

figures must reveal the stir of life by some kind of vitalizing resonance to be perfect. "If the reverberation of the life-breath (*ch'i-yün*) is wanting, it is in vain that they show formal likeness, and if the brush-work is not vigorous, their fine colours are in vain," a statement which stresses better than any lengthy explanations the exigency of the first two principles.

Chang Yen-yüan has nothing to say in this connexion regarding the use of colours (the fourth principle), but in another chapter he warns against "fixing the idea in the colours", (*i.e.* using them as primary means of expression), because then "the shapes of the objects will become deficient". Colours are to him as to most Chinese painters and critics supplementary elements to be used with discrimination. Greater importance is attached to the fifth principle, referring to the composition. According to Chang Yen-yüan, it is "the summing up of everything in painting", whereas the sixth – the transmission of old models by drawing – is said to be "the least important of the Six Principles".

The only painter who, in Chang's opinion, was able to unite and master all the Six Principles was Wu Tao-tzū of T'ang times: "He exhausted them in innumerable forms; a god guided his hand and he absorbed the creative force of Nature completely. The reverberation of the life-breath became so strong and powerful (in his work) that it could hardly be confined to the silk." In other words, only the very greatest of the old masters could endow their creations with the indomitable life-force, or breath of Nature, and thus at the same time – without any further endeavour – comply with all the other fundamental principles of the art of painting.



FIGURE 1. A Calligraphic Specimen by Wang Hsi-chih (321-379). In a faithful early copy.

II

*The Expressionism of Chinese Painting. The Function of Brush-work,
and the Conception of Space.*

TO THE question as to the origin of Chinese painting early Chinese critics gave an unvarying answer, they pointed to the close relationship between painting and writing. From the very beginning the two arts served similar practical and intellectual ends, and though they gradually developed along quite different lines, their fundamental parallelism in thought and application remained a decisive undercurrent which may be noticed in various combinations.

The outward technical or material correspondence between the art of writing and the art of painting in China is so obvious and has been so much commented upon that it hardly need detain us in this connexion. It is to no small extent a result of the fact that the same tools serve for painting and for writing – i.e. the soft hair brush and India ink beside paper or silk – and that consequently the technical training in writing, which was a fundamental feature in the education of the Chinese scholar, became a decisive influence in the development of painting too.

Various manners of forming the Chinese characters or styles of writing have been in use ever since the Han period, such as *li shu*, *k'ai shu*, *hsing shu* and *ts'ao shu*, and they have all been subject to more or less important modifications in accordance with the individual character and temperament of the writers. But however much the rhythm of the brush may have varied, the structural shapes of the characters remained always the same. Some of these manners of writing offered a fairly wide scope for artistic transcription or elaboration, but in order to be comprehensible they had to retain the essential elements of the original pictorial or ideographic signs. Before the writer could indulge in any kind of individual accents or deviations, he had to master the fundamental type forms perfectly. In other words, Chinese script was from the very beginning

a writing in symbols, partly derived from nature, partly from other sources; and though it served intellectual ends, the expressiveness of the script was not dependent simply on its clearness but also on the writer's ability to infuse something of his own consciousness, the rhythm or quality of his own thoughts, into these conventionalized symbols.¹

The same holds true of painting. It was also from the beginning pre-eminently a symbolic mode of expressing thoughts, perceptions or emotions, though the symbols in painting were more closely dependent on nature, less abstract and conventional than in calligraphy. Their development proceeded, so to speak, in a direction opposite to that of the conventionalized characters. But just as the writer had to observe the fundamental form and structure of the traditional signs, so should the painter know and be able to handle freely a certain quantity of pictorial signs or type-forms through which he could give expression to his concepts and which eventually could be combined into pictorial compositions. The knowledge and technical mastery of

¹ The development of the early forms of Chinese script and the graphic and linguistic problems connected with them have been discussed by many scholars ever since the beginning of our era and it is generally agreed that the primitive pictograms were gradually modified, condensed and combined into six classes or kinds of symbolic graphs for things, ideas, sounds, etc., the first two of these classes, known as *hsiang hsiang* (pictorial or representative) and *chih shih* (indicative of actions or states) being the most inclusive and important from a formal point of view. In a recent article by Siên Chien-shih "On early Semeiograms" (in *Monumenta Serica*, XII, 1947), it is, however, pointed out that pictograms are just representations of things and not signs that represent elements of Chinese language, and that before they evolved into such forms of early script as *hsiang hsiang* and *chih shih*, they "passed through an intervening period in which the pictures, which represented things, gradually changed into signs that represented elements of language and consequently only indirectly the things themselves". Such pictograms as could take on a variety of forms and which could represent (indicate) situations as well as objects, may be said to correspond to what we have called type-forms; their usage is relatively versatile and adaptable to temporary, cultural, or individual inferences.

these type-forms, in fact, was no less essential to the painter than the command of the conventionalized pictorial signs to the writer; they formed his artistic vocabulary, so to speak, and had to be acquired through systematic training. In the course of time and in their finest manifestations they became "the evidences of essential reality distilled through centuries of observation of transient effects".¹

The method of study or programme of training for the attainment of this mastery of type-forms is laid down in a number of books prepared for the benefit of students of painting which, in spite of the fact that they are of relatively late date, reflect the attitude towards nature and art so characteristic of the Chinese since earliest times. One of the best of these books is the so-called *Chieh-tzu yüan hua-chuan* which, though it was only published in the seventeenth century, contains a synthesis of the traditional methods of study and aesthetic appreciation. It has wood-cut illustrations which assist the text in giving information about the type-forms which the student had to know if he was to become an artist. The course that he was advised to follow started from the simplest forms or units, then gradually proceeded towards more complicated shapes or combinations of single units. The method of study illustrated here applies in particular to landscape and flower painting (the two most popular specialities in China), and is centred on such things as various kinds of trees, their trunks and leaves, flowers, shrubs and grass, stones, rocks and mountains, clouds, streams and waves, houses, boats and bridges, birds, insects and animals, and there is also an additional volume devoted to human figures, their costumes, positions, movements, etc.

To obtain some notion of how the method and the general principles are applied, we may stop for a moment at the illustrations dedicated to bamboo-painting (one of the principal motifs of Chinese art). The first drawing shows how the separate sections and joints of the trunk should be rendered. The second illustrates the lowest portion of the trunk, down at the ground, some sprouting shoots and

some bending stems. The third represents the top of the bamboo: tender twigs without any leaves, though much alive. In one of the commentaries quoted in the text it is said that the stems should be painted like *li shu*, the branches and twigs like *ts'ao shu*, and the leaves like *k'ai shu*. In the pictures which illustrate the gradual stages in the painting of the leaves - commencing with a single leaf or "flat feather", and progressing to combinations of three, four, five or six leaves - it is also remarked that these may remind one of written characters, a reference that is worth remembering, as another indication of the Chinese way of looking for parallels between writing and painting.

Through such a progressive study as sketched above, the student gradually attained a complete mastery over the various sections of the bamboo; he could use them *ad libitum* in any kind of combinations, or, in other words, they became pictorial symbols through which the painter could give expression to the flow of his thought or emotions, i.e. associative reactions evoked by such significant motifs as, for instance, some tufts of bamboo swaying in the breeze of spring or bending under an autumn storm.

The Chinese painter consequently was, as a rule, less concerned with the faithful reproduction of passing phenomena than with the rendering of the typical features in them which could serve as expressional symbols for his visions or associative ideas. He observed the phenomena of nature no less attentively than his Western colleagues, but he was not fettered to the actual models; his observations were absorbed in his consciousness and transmitted into type-forms which corresponded more or less to his ideas and which he, as a result of long training, could use almost as written characters. Many of the old painters lived, according to tradition, in very close communion with nature, penetrating by days and nights of contemplation into her various moods, thus gradually absorbing these like

¹ Benjamine March, *Some Technical Terms of Chinese Painting*, Baltimore 1935, Preface.



FIGURE 3. Studies of bamboo leaves like flat feathers; others in combination with twigs painted like *kai shu*.
From the *Chieh-tzu yüan hua-chuan*.

series of images on the sensitive film of their minds; recollections which could be developed and transferred in typified forms to paper or silk whenever there was a need for them.

The attitude may not have been quite conscious with the very early painters, but as painting became a fully developed form of art fitted to serve as a means of spiritual expression, this attitude towards nature and this line of study acquired fundamental importance. Nature was no longer to these painters simply a display of objective forms and phenomena, it was something that existed within themselves as well as outside, an ever-changing element of their own consciousness. And when they represented some aspects of it, they revealed something of their own innermost selves, glimpses or reverberations of the great breath or consciousness that animates every form or entity in nature.

Painting of this highly subjective and essentially symbolic kind had not the same need of physical space demarcation or the close definition of limited localities as more realistic forms of painting, which made distinctions in accordance with scientific rules of optical illusion. Chinese pictures were, so to speak, seen and created from within, not from the point of view of an external observer, and they consisted to a high degree of mental reflexes transmitted by type-forms.

Nevertheless, as time went on and painting in China became more and more a medium for the creative imagination, the need was felt to establish the mutual relations between these symbols or type-forms within a certain imaginative space, and thus to convey comprehensive ideas. This had to be done in accordance with the mental vision, which was on the one hand descriptive, but on the other something with no need for definite physical boundaries, *i.e.* a projection of reflexes from the realm of thought. Consequently the Chinese never felt the Western need of what we would call perspective, nor made any effort to break through, or to do away with, the vertical surface of the picture; on the contrary, it was

respected and utilized by painters just as much as by writers. The painter's art consisted in making use of it in such a way that it became an integral part of the composition and contributed to the special effect or atmosphere of the whole. Different ways of achieving this were gradually developed, but they all lead in the same direction, in so far as the painted forms grew out of the background, which was either quite plain or toned in one way or another. It may seem that such a mode of representation was akin to what has been called reversed perspective, but the Chinese painters have in reality never submitted to any strictly formal space construction. They did not feel the need of it, because they never recognized a background plane such as has been accepted by European artists since the Renaissance. The surface on which they painted (and wrote), at first solid, became in time imaginary – a sensitive film or an atmosphere on which their thoughts were projected.

This will become more intelligible if we remember that, with the exception of some of the large wall-paintings, the Chinese pictures were not made to be seen or contemplated from a fixed point of view. Most of the scroll paintings, whether horizontal or vertical, (or album-leaves), were meant to be read or examined with the mind, and not simply to be looked upon or enjoyed visually. As the scenes or things represented lived in the creative mind of the painter, so should they again be absorbed in the consciousness of the beholder, whose enjoyment was dependent on his faculty to read and understand the import of the assembled symbols. The approach was the same, the parallelism with the scrolls of writing quite fundamental. The paintings were no more fixed or permanent things of decoration than certain scrolls of writing. They were as a rule taken out only occasionally, unrolled to be seen (or read) for a while, possibly commented upon in writing, and then again put away as documents stored in boxes.

The close relationship or, as the Chinese say, common origin of the written and painted compositions is clearly reflected in these significant

external conditions, but they are evidently the results of principles inherent in the creative activity expressed in paintings as well as in writings.¹ We may observe them as tendencies rather than definite rules.

The well established way of writing in China is in vertical lines or columns progressing from the right to the left of the paper. The length of the lines depends on the space to be covered, but the movement in writing and reading is always from the top towards the bottom. This vertical movement so strongly expressed in writing became apparently a natural tendency to the Chinese, and gained also a determining influence on the composition of the vertical scroll-paintings. They are, particularly in classical times, conceived – if not painted – from the top towards the bottom, or from behind towards the front, the topmost part being the furthest away. By such a procedure the Chinese evade the difficulty of creating a horizontal plane or stage at an angle to the vertical picture plane.² If they had started to build up their compositions from the lower edge, i.e. the foreground, proceeding gradually upwards and backwards they would have been obliged to break through this background surface in one way or another, a problem encountered time and again (particularly in pictures with relatively large buildings or the like) but seldom perfectly solved.

The main concern of the early painters was not to create impressions of approach or recession, but to state everything as clearly as possible and to make it an essential part of a significant whole, a pictorial design. The pictures of the early periods were not meant to be seen from a fixed point of view near the foreground, but rather from above or from within, so to speak. The beholder was supposed to follow the painter's indications (brush-strokes) in thought and adjust his visual angle in conformity with that of the painter, thus assimilating the impressions and the ideas more or less in the same way as when reading a hanging scroll of writing. And though it may be said that the painter expressed himself in naturalistic symbols or type-forms, more or less corresponding to the highly conventionalized

written signs, it should not be forgotten that the aesthetic significance of the pictures was to no small extent also dependent on other more subtle and variable elements such as the pictorial atmosphere and the relations between the various parts of the composition, which all could be made to contribute to the impressions of space and movement, or what the Chinese called the reverberation of the life-breath (*ch'i yün*). In other words, the Chinese painter was not interested in creating impressions of a particular limited space or place, but rather to make the beholder realize something of the unlimited universal space or *pleroma* in which everything lives and breathes, and through which we may partake in the great life of mountains and waters just as well as of men and gods.

It should, however, be remembered that this conception and rendering of space did not remain unchallenged in later times. The relatively abstract and explicative manner of the earlier masters was gradually modified through the endeavour to give more unified and convincing renderings of actual views based on observations of nature. The new attitude becomes noticeable in the works of some of the great landscape painters of the Yüan period, but it does not become predominant in Chinese landscape-painting until the sixteenth century. In the works of leading masters of this time the horizontal extension is sometimes rendered in a quasi-Western fashion, whereas less advanced painters even at this time and later, remain faithful to the traditional methods handed down by the academicians of Sung times.

¹ The following remarks by Tang Hon in his *Lun hua* (written c.1329) may be remembered as an illustration of the close parallelism between painting and calligraphy so often noted by critics of later times:

"Painting plum-blossoms is called *writing* plum-blossoms (*hsieh mei*), painting bamboos is called *writing* bamboos (*hsieh chu*), painting orchids is also called *writing* orchids (*hsieh lan*). Why? Simply because they are the purest of herbs; the painter must, in doing them, write down his feelings, and that cannot be done simply by representing the formal likeness."

² The word "plane" is not used here for an abstract concept, but for the solid surface on which the writers as well as the painters worked.

Colour never had the same decisive importance in Chinese as in Western painting, though it was by no means excluded. Distinguishing decorative pigments were apparently quite essential during the early periods, as for instance in the pictures which, according to the old historians, were made as "signs and distinguishing banners", or later on in the illustrations of gods and heroes or in the wall-paintings of the sanctuaries and Buddhist temples. They were used for purely decorative details, costumes and the like, but seldom of primary importance. In most instances the picture was drawn and sketched in ink before the colours were applied, or the pigments were mixed with the ink and used more or less diluted in the same way as the India ink. The combination of ink and colour in various degrees of density became in later times a favourite medium of expression; it was essentially akin to ink painting and had little, if anything, in common with the substantial pigments of earlier epochs, which were mixed with glue and varnish. The quality and character of the colouring was, indeed, largely dependent on the cohesive mediums, and as very little is known about these, a closer technical discussion of the colour problem in Chinese painting is hardly possible. It may, however, be remembered that the Chinese classify as a technical speciality so-called "boneless paintings", which were executed without any preparatory ink-drawing, more or less like water-colour paintings and thus more dependent on the hues and washes than on the strokes and dots of the designing brush. This kind of painting is said to have been introduced by certain flower-painters of the tenth century, and it was practised by their followers also in later periods.

The vital nerve in all the formal and technical devices of Chinese painting was, however, the brush-work, i.e. the handling of the most sensitive tool that ever served to transmit the painter's "life-breath" and his creative thought. It was not simply a technical method, or a manner of manipulating a tool that could be acquired by systematic training, but something that was charged with the creative

impetus of the painter and dependent on his mental and spiritual attitude. This kind of painting, we saw, was developed along much the same lines as the art of writing, and it demanded the same degree of concentration in the handling of the brush and ink as was necessary in writing. The exigencies of the technique were such as to allow of no hesitation, no uncertainty. The painter had to seize the essentials of a motif in quick decisive strokes and transmit its inner significance by means of pictorial symbols or type-forms, making it thus live or speak as a work of art.

How it was done can hardly be explained in words, because though the result can be observed on the objective plane, the actual performance is a matter of subjective experience. The most suggestive indication of what the brush-work actually meant when handled by a great master is given by Chang Yen-yüan, in his chapter devoted to "The Brush-work of Ku K'ai-chih, Lu T'an-wei, Chang Sêng-yu and Wu Tao-tzū", where he characterizes very vividly Wu Tao-tzū's mastery in handling the brush.

"Someone asked me", he writes, "how is it possible that Wu did not use ruler and foot measure and yet could draw (perfect) curves and arcs, lines as straight as a lance, standing pillars and connecting beams?" To which I answered: "He held on to the spirit and blended with the creative force of Nature, which thus borrowed Wu's brush. His ideas, as has been said, were fixed before he took up the brush; when the picture was finished, it expressed them all."

To exemplify this perfect co-operation with nature, Chang refers to Chuang-tzū's well-known stories about the cook of Prince Hui and the stonemason from Ying, who performed the most difficult tasks apparently without any effort. They had grasped the secret of Tao, the "Way of Heaven", which is not to strive, and yet to know how to overcome. Really great works of art must be done in the same way; as further explained by Chang: "He who deliberates and moves the brush intent upon making a picture, misses the art of painting to a still

greater extent, while he who cogitates and moves the brush without such intentions, achieves the art of painting. His hands will not get stiff; his heart will not grow cold; without knowing how, he accomplishes it."

Chang Yen-yüan here expresses the same essential truth as was asserted over and over again by the ancient philosophers of China, whether Taoist, Confucian, or Buddhist, i.e. to understand the meaning or significance of a thing, one must become the thing, blend one's soul or consciousness with it and reach the mental attitude which brings knowledge without intellectual deliberation. Or, in the words of Confucius: "He who is in harmony with Nature hits the mark without effort and apprehends the truth without thinking". The attitude is exactly the same as the Taoist idea of the identity of the subjective and the objective. "Only the truly intelligent understand this principle of identity. They do not view things as apprehended by themselves subjectively, but transfer themselves into the position of the things viewed. And viewing them thus they are able to comprehend them, nay, to master them; and he who can master them is near. So it is, that to place oneself in subjective relation with externals, without consciousness of their objectivity, this is Tao."¹

The Taoist conception of real knowledge or insight, as an identity between the knower and the known, is applied by Chang to the painter and his work, and also to the beholder and the painting, and in applying this kind of perception to the artistic activity he lays one of the cornerstones of Chinese aesthetics. It became accepted by most of the subsequent writers on painting as something almost self-evident. They never take the trouble of systematically defining or describing this attitude, but make us nevertheless realize its fundamental importance by their more or less suggestive allusions to the artist's creative activity.

There we must leave the matter now because to enter into a further discussion of it would lead us beyond the limits of the present study. It should

simply be added that the criterion of success, or the highest grade of perfection, in this kind of painting was, according to the Taoist conception, the quality of self-evidence (*tzü jan*), something that made it appear as if created by Nature. Chang Yen-yüan insists upon this and, referring to a picture that possesses it, he says: "One does not get tired by looking at it a whole day. By concentration of the spirit and by far-reaching meditation one realizes the self-existent; both the painted thing and oneself are forgotten; the realization is separated from the form. 'The body becomes like dry wood, and the mind like dead ashes.' He (the painter) attained the mysterious fitness (*miao li*) which may be called the Tao of painting."

This "mysterious fitness" was indeed the very essence of Tao as illustrated by Chuang-tzū with the well-known anecdotes about the cook, the carpenter and other workmen who possessed Tao and consequently accomplished their work without any apparent exertion. The same criteria were applied by the old critics to the activity of the painters. The art of painting was to them primarily to reveal the inner fitness or reason of things, something "beyond outward likeness", to quote Chang Yen-yüan once more; and they found it consequently futile to attempt to reach the essentials of this art by intellectual definitions or formal analysis. Such methods could never penetrate beyond the symbols. But to us who are trying to understand the message of this art the symbols are of the greatest importance. We have to study them for what they are, study them and scrutinize them in search of their aesthetic significance – a slow and fascinating endeavour, and whether it will yield some results depends upon the experience and sensitiveness of the student.

What we obtain are simply glimpses of an inner light, reflexes of a vision or an impulse that roused the painter to an effort: fleeting impressions of life in nature as in the soul of man, the reverberation of the universal "life-breath" in the innumerable phenomena of the objective world.

¹ Giles' translation, *Chuang-tzū*, p. 20.

So true is this that many Chinese paintings are like instantaneous impressions which pass across the screen of the mind, lasting only as long as we can concentrate on their meaning. The material objects may not be fully shown or may be veiled in a hazy atmosphere; yet they are there, and we get an idea of their structure and shapes. Even though simplified, everything is convincing in its form as well as in its movement. The objects exist in a space which is suggested by the distribution of the forms but not painted or constructed. It is sometimes nothing but the empty background, the bare silk or paper. Yet it becomes an atmosphere like the air around us, which we may call emptiness, because it is transparent to our sense of vision, but which is none the less loaded with "atomic" life.

Such a mode of representation became possible because the Chinese painter did not view or contemplate nature from the outside. He did not represent the landscapes or other motifs as seen through a window from the fixed standpoint of an outward

observer; he represented them as parts of his own consciousness. His conception of space could not be materially limited by means of linear perspective, or similar devices, because it was the portion of infinity that entered into his own mind. It was something within him just as well as outside himself, and out of this illimitable *pleroma* of visual life the forms were born, just as Nature's creations grow out of the thoughts or seeds in her bosom.

Through systematic practice and observation the painter acquired his knowledge of the phenomena of the objective world, but he used them merely as symbols or reflections of more permanent things or thoughts existing in the space-time continuum of his consciousness. It may after all not be possible to represent this completely in a formal way, by material symbols, but the Chinese have succeeded in suggesting it by infusing life into emptiness and transmitting movement by the brush strokes, thus opening up a realm of existence in which physical limitations no longer hold good.

The Period of the Warring States and the Han Dynasties

OUR KNOWLEDGE about painting in China in the Han period and before is to a much larger degree based on literary records than on still existing specimens of pictorial art. The references to the former which were made in the preceding pages must here suffice, but a few remarks about actual works of art dating from these early epochs may be necessary to complete this introduction to our study of the development of Chinese painting.

Passing over the engraved or cast images of animals, human beings or elements of landscape that may be seen on some sacrificial bronze vessels of the Chou period, and which bear witness to a certain degree of naturalistic characterization, we may call attention to some of the recent excavations in the Changsha region (in the former Ch'u state) which include interesting specimens of pictorial art (now preserved in the Historical Museum in Peking).

Most remarkable among these is the small painting (c.30×20 cm.) on coarse silk representing a woman in long trailing garments strapped around her very thin waist. She is rendered like a silhouette, in profile, holding an object in her lifted hands, while a large phoenix and a slender dragon are soaring in the air in front of her. The exact explanation of the subject has not been given, but the presence of the phoenix and the dragon may be taken as indications of the lady's imperial rank. The actual picture is badly stained, darkened and spotted with holes, which produces a rather blurred effect. Most of the available reproductions¹ are consequently made from copies of the design drawn on a neutral background. The strongly accentuated

linear style is most evident in these; it has something of the same synthetic sweep and sharpness as may be observed in the wooden statuettes of human beings, birds and animals which have been excavated in the same Changsha region. The earliest and most significant of these are generally accepted – on historical and stratigraphic evidence – as works of the fourth century B.C.

Among the objects of wood or lacquer with painted figurative decoration from the same region should be mentioned in particular a small round casket on three feet of the *lien* type. The body, which is of wood and lacquer, has shrunk and cracked in places, but the paintings are still clearly visible. On the one side may be seen two figures in a small cart on high wheels attached to a white horse galloping at full speed, and on the opposite side two figures between blossoming trees. The pigments used are of a thick waxy substance and the light tones, greenish, reddish and white, possess considerable luminosity. The naturalistic accents in the pictorial interpretation of the motifs indicate a well-advanced stage in the stylistic development.²

The objects from the Changsha region (and from other places) which are decorated with freely conventionalized animal and bird-motifs combined with scrolls, cloudlets and ornamental borders, belong to a different province of art. Their artistic significance depends on the suggestion of almost

¹ As for instance in Mr. Haiz Nai's article in *China Reconstructs*, 1953.

² Reproduced in the illustrated catalogue of the Changsha exhibition in Peking: *Ch'u wên-wu chün-lan t'u lu* (1954).

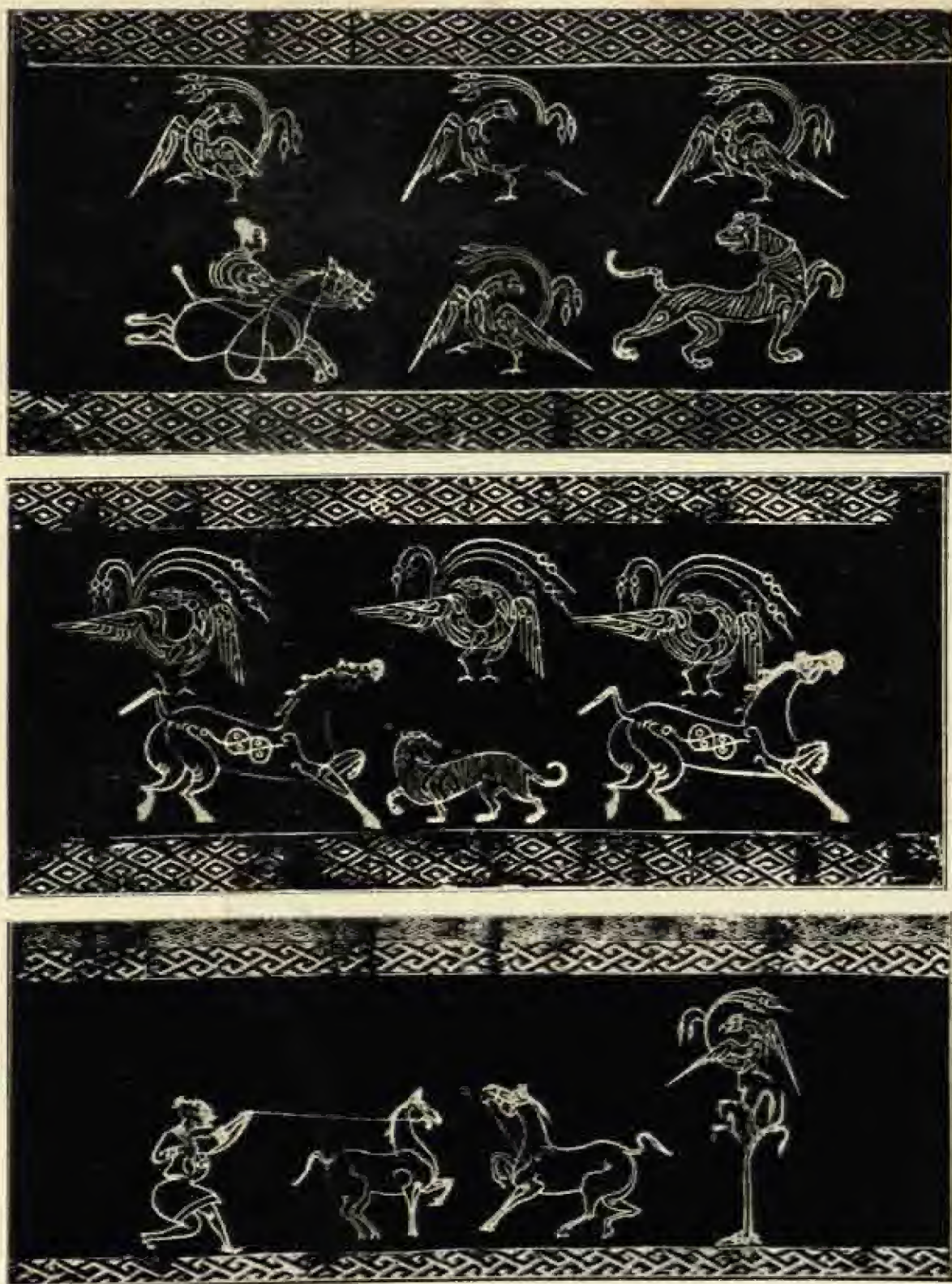


FIGURE 4. Large hollow tomb tiles from Honan. Decorated with impressed designs of figures, animals and birds.

unremitting movement conveyed by spiralling lines and springy shapes, all subject to the same elastic rhythm. The correspondence between these objects and some of the bronze vessels inlaid with patterns of silver or gold, of the fifth and fourth centuries, is too obvious to need any further comment at this place. To what extent objects of this kind should be included in a history of Chinese paintings, is indeed a matter of opinion; they are not paintings according to the traditional implications of the word, and though some of them may reveal a growing interest in nature, their artistic significance depends on the transmutation of the motifs into ornamental designs.¹ Yet there are exceptions to this rule, such as the large bronze mirrors in the Fogg Museum, Cambridge, Mass., and the Moriya Collection in Kyōto, on which the pictorial decoration (executed with thick pigments) has a naturalistic rather than an ornamental fashion. The motifs include men on foot or on horseback, or driving in carts, beside trees and rudiments of landscape. These mirrors are also reputed to originate from the ancient Ch'u state, but as they do not form parts of the scientifically controlled archaeological excavations from the Changsha region, and furthermore have been subject to considerable restoration, their documentary value is much reduced and, in some instances, may be questioned.

A special class of quasi-pictorial representations which reached great popularity in the period of the Warring States and the Han dynasties is formed by the "tomb tiles",² i.e. hollow clay slabs used for the decoration of mortuary shrines, or "spirit chambers", sometimes erected in front of the actual tombs. The best among these possess a considerable artistic interest due to their decoration with human figures, animals and birds in characteristic attitudes. When the silhouetted figures or trees are filled out with pigments, their resemblance to paintings becomes very suggestive. Yet it should be remembered that these tomb tiles are not original pictorial compositions but decorative designs pieced together of typified single elements, such as human figures,

horses, tigers, dragons, trees and birds, impressed in the wet clay and arranged like stencilled patterns on a neutral background. The method of execution is thus rather mechanical, but the single motifs are sometimes very expressive and perfectly fitted for mural decoration.

The production of tomb tiles was continued through the Han dynasties but the patterns and decorative character became gradually more and more stereotyped. Almost all of the later slabs are impressed with geometric ornaments, sometimes combined with figures and animals in relief instead of the earlier incised figures, a mode of execution which makes some of these later clay reliefs more akin to sculptural than to pictorial works of art.

The pictorial or rather graphic character is more manifest in some of the figured stone slabs of the Han period likewise made for the decoration of tomb chambers. A great number of these are known and they are executed according to various methods – some of them being mainly engravings, others more like flat reliefs – and the material has increased considerably during the last few years through the excavation of several important tombs at Fu-shan, An-ch'iu and Yi-nan in the province of Shantung. From the last-named place alone more than fifty slabs have been recovered, and through the excellent rubbings of some of these, now on exhibition in the Historical Museum in Peking, the student may obtain some idea of their motifs and style. Some of them represent fantastic elemental beings of quasi-human, bird-like or animal shapes – presumably the inhabitants of the world where the "earth spirit" (*hun*) of the deceased may dwell for a while – others are illustrations of certain characteristic aspects of social life in Han times. They show

¹ These materials have been discussed by Michael Sullivan in his articles: "On the Origin of Landscape Representation in Chinese Art", *Archives of the Chinese Art Society of America*, 1953, and "Pictorial Art and the Attitude toward Nature in Ancient China", *The Art Bulletin*, xxxvi, 1954.

² Cf. Otto Fischer, *Die Chinesische Malerei der Han Dynastie*, Berlin 1937, and Olov Janson, *Bricks and Objects Ceramiques Funeraires de l'Epoque Han*, Paris 1936, and W. C. White, *Tomb Tile Pictures of Ancient China*, Toronto 1939.

people at their daily tasks, feasting, playing musical instruments (pipes, lutes, chimes, drums, bells, etc.), dancing or occupied in sacrificial offerings. Very prominent among these illustrations are the acrobatic groups (balancers, tight-rope walkers, horse acrobats, etc.), but it is significant that the carriages of some of the prominent people are drawn not by horses but by dragons – animals that may be more common beyond the tomb. See Plates 3 and 4.

As may be realized from the above indications, these illustrations possess the spontaneous quality of sketches from life or from the no less lively spheres of Taoist tales. They are replete with sudden movement and momentariness and may thus be said to possess something of the "spirit resonance" so highly esteemed and often searched for by the Chinese painters. In this respect they are far superior to the larger sets of tomb slabs or stone engravings which have become well known through numerous publications, i.e. the slabs from Hsiao-t'ang shan, from Chia-hsiang (Wu Liang-tz'ü) and from Chin-hsien (the tomb of general Chu Wei).¹

The first-named, which are still in their original position in the small shrine at Hsiao-t'ang shan (erected before A.D. 129) are most closely related to the afore-mentioned impressed or stamped clay slabs, because they are composed of a certain number of type models of human and animal figures in various postures, men running and riding, horses pacing or galloping, carts, buildings, implements for warfare or household use, dogs and birds, etc., i.e. elements which have, so to speak, been pieced together or combined to form processions, battle scenes or domestic festivals. The figures are thus mostly represented in profile, advancing in long rows made up of carts and riders, or marching in files into battle carrying their shields and spears. Yet, though the battle scene conveys the impression of great agitation, jumble and flurry, due to the many riders in flying gallop with drawn bows or fallen from their steeds, and foot soldiers advancing with lowered lances, there is little spatial inter-relation between the figures, and their positions after or

above each other serve to indicate the sequence of events in the tale.

The stone mason's skill in utilizing the rather limited number of type figures with which he operates is admirable; it is only after a closer study of the designs that one discovers the repetitions and realizes that these illustrations are not far removed from the stamped tomb tiles of pre-Han times. The difference lies in the fact that the component parts are now in a loosely logical relation to each other, complementary clauses in a two-dimensional narration. In the method of execution, too, they retain a connexion with the works of painting or drawing which is no longer prevalent in the numerous reliefs from the shrines of the Wu family in Chia-hsiang. These are from the technical point of view more like products of the sculptor's chisel, the figures being brought out in relief against a striated background.

The shrines of the Wu family, which were erected between A.D. 145 and 168, perished long ago, but most of the stone slabs which formed their walls exist in a small museum at the place, and their original positions and combinations in three different shrines have been carefully reconstructed.² We need hardly go into any details about their motifs and historical significance; the ideas of Taoist origin and moralizing Confucian tales which have inspired them have been fully explained by Chavannes, Sekino, Fischer a.o., and the more realistic representations of ceremonial means and festival processions have often been used as illustrations of the life of Chinese noblemen in the Han period. It has also been pointed out that some of the compositions with legendary motifs correspond to contemporary versified descriptions of certain wall-paintings in the palace hall of Prince Liu Yü, Duke of Lu (c. 154–129 B.C.)

¹ Cf. Chavannes, *Mission archéologique*, etc., 1, Paris 1913. Sekino, *Shina santosho ni okeru Kan'ei jūmō no hyōshoku*, Tokyo 1916. Fischer, *Die Chinesische Malerei der Han-Dynastie*, Berlin 1931, a.o.

² The latest and most systematic report about these reliefs is Wilma Fairbank's article "The Offering Shrines of Wu Liang-tz'ü" in *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, March 1941.

If we compare these reliefs from the shrines of the Wu family with the engraved slabs at Hsiao-t'ang shan, it becomes evident that they represent a more advanced stage in the stylistic evolution. It is true that the figures still appear mainly like silhouettes – in full profile or front view – but there is a certain elaboration within the silhouettes by means of engraved lines, which serve to accentuate individual features, details of costume and the like, and they all appear as parts of a larger ensemble, as they play their parts in the stories or dramas illustrated in these reliefs (cf. Pl. 2).

There is a continuous movement and interplay of the figures which tends to detach them from the unifying flat surface plane. Some of them, for instance in the mythological scenes, are placed in a half circle or moving obliquely on the clouds, and the men are sometimes turning towards each other in conversation. This tendency towards a somewhat freer pictorial arrangement may well be explained by the supposition that the compositions are based on wall-paintings which, perforce, have become somewhat schematized in the transmission or translation into polished stone reliefs.

The relation between contemporary mural paintings and some of the engraved or chiselled representations on stone is further illustrated by the slabs from the shrine at the tomb of general Chu Wei, presumably erected some time after his death in about A.D. 50. The building has fallen into ruin, but a sufficient number of the pictured slabs have been preserved to make an approximate reconstruction of the shrine and its decoration possible.¹ We refer the student to Wilma Fairbank's discussion of this problem and limit our remarks to a few observations regarding the pictorial character of the decoration as far as it can be ascertained from existing rubbings of the stone engravings.

It should be noted that the decoration comprised not only figurative scenes, but also architectural details, such as pillars, capitals and brackets which served as a framework for the wall decorations. The whole interior of the shrine was thus arranged after

the model of a building with wooden pillars, brackets and beams in a fashion that evidently was more akin to painted decorations executed on the plastered wall of contemporary halls than to any kind of wall decorations by means of stone slabs or clay reliefs.

According to the reconstruction proposed by Wilma Fairbank, each wall was divided not only vertically but also horizontally, i.e. into a main story and an attic. The latter was reserved for pictures of women and onlookers, while the sacrificial meal in honour of the defunct was represented in a series of pictures covering the main section of all the three walls.

Each wall was divided into two equal halves by a central pillar, and on these the compositions were identically arranged along diagonal lines accentuated by screens and benches which seemed to be sloping from the upper part of the central pillar downward and outward. This becomes evident from the rubbings, and we can also distinguish the people who are working on the ground, preparing the dishes and serving the meals, but the principal guests of the occasion are missing (obliterated or reincised). The men who stand behind the screens are better preserved and also most of the female onlookers in the attic.

All these scenes are drawn as from above and extended on the surface with a view to obtaining as much room as possible for the display of the many kinds of accessories. The placing of the figures in relation to the diagonal screens and benches contributes to the impression of a kind of stage, or a room hung with curtains, in which the ceremony takes

¹ The first to give information about Chu Wei's shrine was Chavannes (1908) *op. cit.*, but he offers no reproductions of the engravings. Otto Fischer gives a detailed account of some of the scenes which he reproduces from rubbings. See *Die Chinesische Malerei der Han-Dynastie* (1931). He emphasizes their close relation to contemporary painting but as his description is based on an incomplete series of rubbings, he offers no information about the decoration as a whole. This is to be found in Wilma Fairbank's article, "A Structural Key to Han Mural Art", in *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, April 1942. She presents a complete reconstruction of the whole scheme of decoration and suggestions regarding its stylistic derivation.

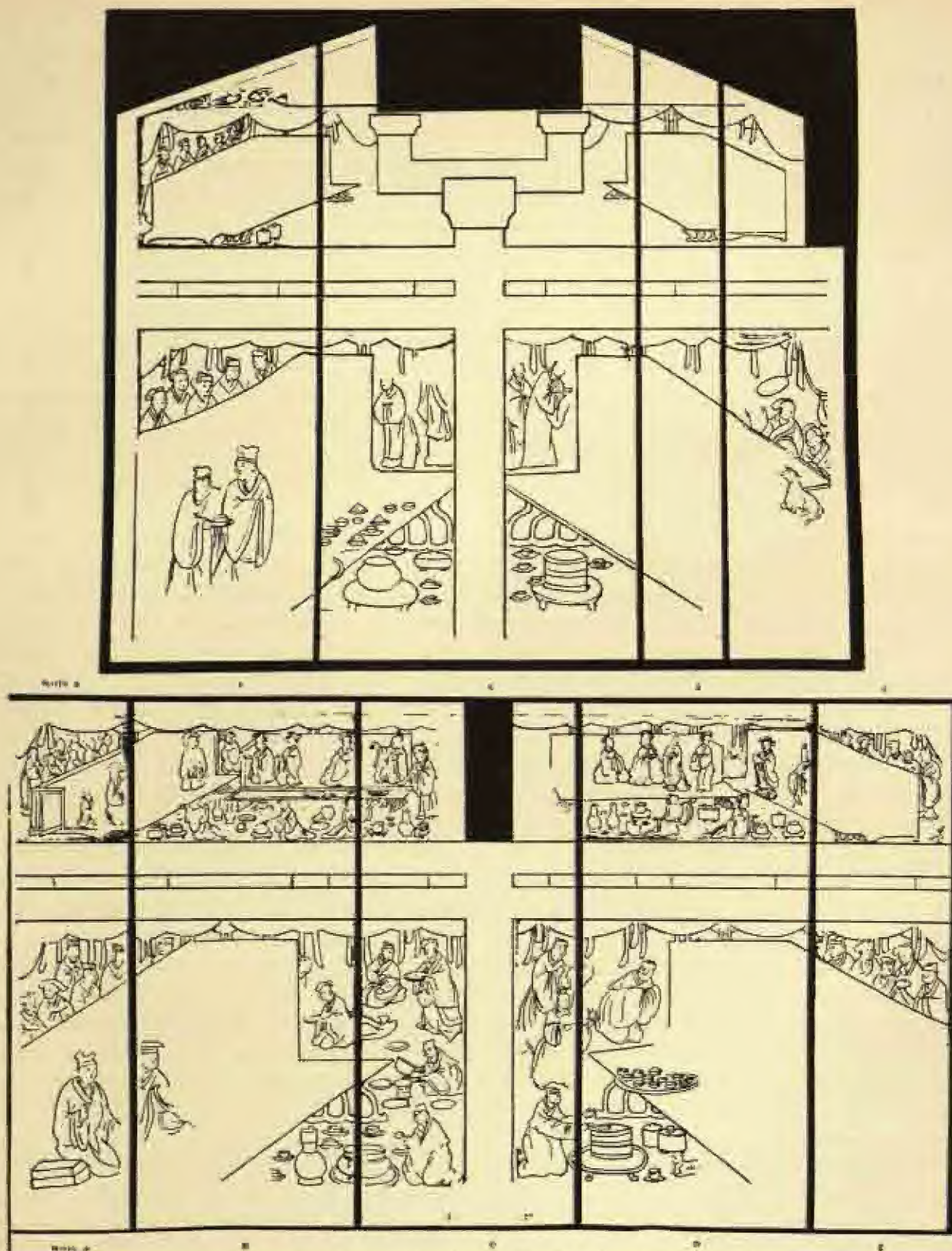


FIGURE 5. Reconstructive drawings of two walls in General Chu Wei's tomb shrine published by Wilma Fairbank in *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, April 1943.



FIGURE 6. Landscapes with men harvesting and shooting water-fowl.
A stamped tile from Szechuan.

place. No less important in this respect are the above-mentioned architectural features which enclose the various spatial units like a substantial wooden framework. There is no regular construction according to Western notions of perspective, no attempt to interrelate the various parts as seen from one point of view; it is a descriptive illustration according to the artist's ideas and set down to be seen with the mind's eye.

The artistic interest and expressiveness of these designs must have been greatly increased by the characterization of some of the principal figures. We know them only through the rubbings of the somewhat restored or recut designs, but they impress us as uncommonly powerful and dignified illustrations to the old chroniclers' admiring words about the wall-paintings in the imperial palaces representing ancient heroes and models of virtue.

The question how far these stone engravings may be accepted as representatives of the development of contemporary painting has been variously answered, and it must be admitted that it leaves room for diverging opinions. The means of expression is almost exclusively line. The forms are conveyed by the contours, the movements by the flow and rhythm of the lines. There is no attempt at a direct imitation of painting in a technical sense, yet it is evident that the principal scenes and the decoration as a whole, including the architectural features,

could hardly have been conceived or designed by anyone but a painter. But to what extent his designs have been faithfully transposed on stone is still an open question.

The use of decorated stone slabs in the tombs and the mortuary shrines was no doubt caused by the desire to make these rooms for the dead as permanent and lasting as possible. But painted as well as stamped bricks were also used for the same purpose, particularly at places where suitable stone material was less abundant than in Shantung. The stamped hollow tiles are, as said above, quite common in Central China, whereas those with painted decorations are very rare. They have not withstood the wear of time as successfully as the stamped bricks and engraved stone slabs.¹

If our explanations of some of the carved and engraved stone slabs from the mortuary shrines in Shantung are accepted, it seems evident that there existed at the time and probably in earlier years, painted decorations of a similar nature in the shrines or tombs of prominent men. Only a few of these have as yet become known and as no satisfactory reproductions of them are available, we can mention them only in passing.

The most interesting among the pictorial tomb decorations of the later Han dynasty which have come to light are the wall-paintings in some of the tombs in the suburbs or neighbourhood of Liao-

¹ Engraved and carved stone slabs were made during the Eastern Han dynasty not only in Shantung, but also in the South-western part of China, in Szechuan, but these have generally a more sculptural character and less connexion with the art of painting. Rubbings of interesting examples of the Szechuan reliefs have been published in Segalen-Lartigue, *Mission Archéologique en Chine, 1. L'Art Funéraire à l'époque des Han* (Paris 1923) and more recently by R. C. Rudolph in *Han Tomb Art of West China* (Berkeley 1931) and by Richard Edwards in an article in *Artibus Asiae*, vol. XVII (1934) called "The Cave Reliefs at Ma Hao".

The materials published in these books and articles is mainly from the neighbourhood of Hsin-chin and Chia-ting on the Min river, where a great number of tombs are hollowed out in the reddish sandstone cliffs of the river bank, the reliefs being in part decorations of the outer rooms or vestibules and in part of the doors and sarcophagi. They represent mainly single figures or animals, sometime combined in groups or rows and often in

intense movement or great tension. The best among them are very interesting examples of expressionistic art, though in sculptural rather than in pictorial transposition.

The same is true also of the stamped clay-reliefs or tomb tiles collected from various places in Szechuan (now mainly in Ch'eng-to). They are in some instances very attractive examples of what might be called plastic painting. The compositions include not only human figures, horses and cars, but also birds and fishes, trees and various plants. The living beings are mostly represented in vivid action, occupied in hunting, fishing or harvesting, and when the compositions also contain elements of landscape they receive a more pictorial character. Though made up of single units or symbolic elements these are brought together in unified designs, which might be rendered in paintings. Some of the Szechuan tomb tiles are, as a matter of fact, more accomplished naturalistic conceptions than the tomb tile pictures from Honan and Shantung, even though composed of figures impressed in relief instead of incised patterns.

yang, a town half-way between Mukden and Port Arthur. A few words about them may here be added in spite of the fact that practically all these pictures have been lost through adverse circumstances, and only a few have become known in reproduction.

Japanese archaeologists were carrying on excavations in this part of Manchuria during at least two decades before the war (and also later); their success in uncovering a number of large tombs, some of them with wall-paintings, was conspicuous, but gradually mitigated by the fact that it proved impossible to preserve the pictures.¹ Those which were removed to the Museum in Port Arthur (1927?) were found to be fading away, as the pigments flaked off from the stone slabs, while the tombs uncovered during the last phase of the war remained accessible only for a short time, and the result of the work with the paintings – in the form of excellent copies – had to be abandoned as this part of the country was occupied by the Chinese troops. But as the copies were gradually brought to Peking, they became incorporated in the collections of the Historical Museum, where some of them were on exhibition at the time of my visit in 1954.

The pictures represented motifs similar, at least in part, to those which we know through the stone engravings from the Wu tombs in Shantung. They refer to the actual life of the people for whom they were made and are thus entertaining as illustrations as well as by their spirited pictorial style. Prominent among the larger compositions is the scene from the main central tomb chamber, in which the master of the tomb is receiving two guests, while two servants are assisting. The group is placed in an open pavilion with a far projecting roof, and the *paterfamilias* is represented on a larger scale than the other figures. Another typical illustration is devoted to an acrobatic performance, accompanied by the beating of a large drum and watched by the usual crowd on a place close to a three-storied monumental tower. It takes us into the precincts of a Han city and by

the subtle and spontaneous brush-work conveys an impression of the excitement and tension created by such a performance. Some of the best scenes represent men on horseback or travelling in high-wheeled Peking carts, and here too it is the speed, the sudden flash-like appearance of the bolting and galloping horses, on which the riders are clinging with all their might, that reveals the painter's skill in releasing the life-breath (*cf.* Pl.5). The men who worked here did not hesitate to give free swing to their subtle brushes, and to a joy in creating guided by a keen, penetrating observation of nature. In spite of their fragmentary condition, these paintings may be said to transmit the spirit of genuine Han art.

Similar artistic qualities and the same stylistic features as noted above may also be observed in other series of wall-paintings in tombs at Liao-yang which have been more recently excavated. They should be noted here even though it is as yet impossible for us to attempt a closer discussion of their contents and artistic importance as long as they have not been published by the Chinese archaeologists. I can only lay before the student some photographs of the copies of wall-paintings in one of these newly uncovered tombs which have been sent to me by the authorities in Peking and which may serve to enlarge our appreciation of Han painting (Figs.8-12).

The copies evidently represent only detached sections or bits of larger compositions, but seem to indicate that the motifs of the pictures were of the same kind as those represented in the stone reliefs of the Wu-liang shrines and also in the paintings of the Pei-yüan tomb at Liao-yang. They belong by their

¹ A short account of the work of the Japanese archaeologists and the vicissitudes of fortune connected with the discoveries of the paintings is given in the article by Wilma Fairbank and Masao Kitano, "Han Mural Paintings in the Pei-yuan tomb at Liao-yang", *Artibus Asiae*, vol.XVII, 3/4. Among the Japanese publications referring to these excavations should be mentioned: Yagi, "Wall-paintings in an Ancient Tomb excavated at Liao-yang", *Archaeology of Manchuria* 1928; Hamada, *Archaeological Researches in East Asia*, 1930; Harada, "On Ancient Mounds with Wall-paintings, etc.", *Kokkai* 629 (1943); Komai, *Tombs of the Han Dynasty discovered at Liao-yang*, Tokyo 1950.

motifs as well as by their style to the same group and may thus be dated towards the end of the second century, if not later. Here again we meet the noblemen travelling on horseback or in small carts, probably forming parts of a cortège of guests arriving at a ceremonial feast, and also various kinds of jugglers, acrobats and musicians whose task it was to amuse and entertain the guests at such occasions. They are here represented most vividly, completely absorbed in the performance of their stupendous feats. Illustrations of such momentary situations are here rendered with a dexterity in the handling of the brush hardly surpassed by later painters, whereas the stylization of the sturdy horses with their high curving necks, bulging chests and short tripping legs, is achieved in adherence to the Bactro-Hellenistic type well known through statuettes in clay and bronze as well as stone reliefs of the period.

The paintings uncovered in 1953-1954 in a large stone-lined tomb at Wang-tu in Hopei are known through the full-size copies on exhibition in the Historical Museum in Peking and through photographs partly reproduced in Chinese periodicals. They are likewise ascribed to the Eastern Han dynasty, and to judge by their style one might be inclined to place them before the Liao-yang tombs.

The pictures represent simply rows of figures – said to be at least twenty-four – somewhat under life-size and practically all turned in full or three-quarter profile. Below the figures are numerous domestic animals and fowls. As far as may be concluded from the photographs at our disposal (Figs. 13-15), the main idea seems to have been to illustrate how a large number of subordinate officials are reverently saluting or paying homage to a landlord or governor. The men are mostly represented slightly stooping, saluting with joined hands and, in some cases, holding a *kuei* tablet in front of them. The respective official ranks of these gentlemen are indicated in inscriptions (preserved only in part); through these we learn that the assembly includes minor civil officials and messengers clearing

the way before them. The man who is seated on a low platform is marked as the secretary (the *Chu pu*) and he too lifts a *kuei* tablet in one hand, whereas the object in his other hand is no longer clearly distinguishable.

The paintings are executed on a thin white coating which covers the trimmed stone walls. The colours are darkened by age and dirt but the broad black outlines have retained their vigorous sweep, and produce a decorative effect reminding us of the boldly executed ink-paintings of the so-called unrestrained type produced by the painters of Shu in the tenth century. This kind of synthetic expressionism is also predominant in the animal paintings – the white hare, the fawn and the horned sheep – but the facial characterization of the men is most carefully worked out with a fine brush and exact indication of every hair in the moustaches and eye-lashes. Figures like these may serve to give some idea about the monumental wall-paintings of the Han period of which so little has survived except in the transformations in stone reliefs and engravings.

The above-mentioned tomb-paintings which are still *in situ*, would indeed merit to be more fully illustrated and appreciated as specimens of mural painting in the Han period, but it may take some time before this study can be completed in detail. In the meantime we may turn to some minor paintings on hollow tiles or sacrificial objects of clay unearthed from Han tombs. Most important among these are five slabs in the museum in Boston which originally formed the pediment and lintel of a doorway leading into a tomb chamber. They are decorated on both sides with paintings executed on a white slip which very easily comes off; the paintings on the back of the pediment are as a matter of fact practically worn off, but those on the front may be seen at least in part.

The main motif is here an animal fight. A tiger and a bear are depicted ready to spring at each other, while two other animals of the same species are held in reserve by the attendants, of whom there are at least six. Most of these men are provided with short

spears or whips, which probably served them to keep the beasts in subjection. The long rectangular pieces are decorated with frieze-like compositions of standing and walking figures, but the real import of these compositions remains obscure. On the front we see a score of figures, mostly male, in long garments, some standing in conversation, others respectfully approaching a more prominent member of the company, others again running away or attacking a neighbour. On the opposite side of these horizontal blocks the figures are female, with the exception of one, who seems to be a vendor of jewels or the like. Two of the young ladies are occupied in adorning themselves with necklaces, and the others are grouped together as if they were playing or dancing (Pls. 6, 7).

The figures are executed with dark lines, like India-ink drawings, on a white ground, and inside these leading contours thin washes of colour have been used – bright red, pale green, light brown, and other tones – which, however, are now largely obliterated. The brush-work is swift and unhesitating, without the least trace of alterations or posterior elaboration. There is no modelling whatsoever; the drawing of the faces, for instance, is simplified to the last degree: a contour and some dots or thin strokes for the mouth, nose, and eyes. Yet, every one of them has a definite character, which in some instances borders on caricature. They move and act and gesticulate with the spontaneity of living beings who have been caught in quite casual situations. Some of the men are absorbed in very lively conversation, and the frail ladies seem to flutter and wave about like playing sprites, the sleeves and flowing folds of their long stiff garments seeming almost to carry them like wings. There is something unearthly in their slenderness and the swiftness of their movements. But such was the ideal of women's beauty in the time of Han.

The grouping of the figures is singularly effective. They may at first sight appear to be jotted down quite casually, some in groups, some isolated, but on closer study it becomes evident that they are

arranged with exquisite art and a remarkable faculty for spacing. It would hardly be correct to speak of a continuous movement of line in these compositions such as we observed in the engraved stone slabs, although the swift and spontaneous brush-strokes are the same all through. Yet there is a kind of continuity in this frieze-like composition, spanning the intervals like the reverberation of sounds or the recurrence of rhyme. It is supported by the expressive postures and gestures, the quick turnings and movements of the figures, but the main element of unity is an impression of space, which the artist has evoked with the simplest possible means. There is no definite stage, only the unified white background, but as the actors turn and move in different directions, they lead our eyes inwards as well as sideways. The intervals between them become something more than bits of a dead wall; they serve to increase the impression of a wide room or open space in which the figures appear. We meet here for the first time that peculiar faculty, so characteristic of the best products of Chinese painting, to utilize the intervals, the apparent emptiness between the forms, to increase the significance of the representation.¹

The minor objects of dry lacquer or clay with painted decor are as a rule more important as specimens of decorative arts than as examples of strictly pictorial ideas. Even when the motifs comprise some figures or animals, these are more or less subject to the general pattern of the decor, the shape of the object, its utility and the quality of its material. Within this class of decorative objects with pictorial decor may, however, be singled out one remarkable specimen on which the paintings are of greater importance than usual and as such most valuable documents of Han art. I am thinking of the so-called Painted Basket which was excavated some thirty years ago at Nanseizi in Northern Korea, an

¹ "We have had the prose narration in the battle scenes. Here we have the clear emergence of the lyrical element, of that captured moment that was to characterize Chinese painting for so many years to come, the triumph of the mind." – W. H. Wells.

object probably from the end of the Han period. It is, strictly speaking, not a basket but an oblong box (39 × 18 cm.) made of plaited bamboo ribs, some of which – along the edges, at the corners and on the lid – are sufficiently broad and smooth to serve as background for the paintings. These consist of single figures beside an ornamental framework. There are not less than ninety-four men in all, some seated, some standing, united in pairs or arranged in a row, more or less depending on the proportion of the spaces to be decorated. The best preserved are the seated figures along the upper edge of the basket, because when the lid was put on they were covered by its rim (Pl. 8).

This frieze is not simply a line of seated figures, repeated one after the other with slight variations; quite the contrary. It may rather be described as the animated colloquium of a number of old philosophers – be they Confucian or Taoist – grey-beards and legendary dignitaries, some of them marked by inscribed names. Most of them are, as a matter of fact, coupled in pairs or in groups of two or three, and engaged in disputes or heated conversations. The groups are in some instances divided by ornamental screens and placed under draperies, which contribute to the impression of a number of separate interiors. No less important in this respect are the movements and attitudes of the figures; though seated on the ground they are not placed in straight profile or front view, but bending and turning towards each other in a more or less spontaneous fashion. The vividness of their conversation is reflected in their facial expressions and their gestures, which add a dramatic touch to some of the

groups and at the same time serve to emphasize the third dimension in which the figures are turning and moving.

In spite of the small size and the narrow spaces into which these figures are squeezed, each one of them has an individual, or rather typical, appearance, probably representing in this respect the same degree of characterization as the famous wall-paintings in the palaces of the Han emperors. According to the inscriptions, there are both elevating and depressing examples of human behaviour among these portraits on the basket; they may indeed have served as "moral examples" just as well as the illustrative wall-paintings.

The most noticeable colours in these pictures are nowadays a reddish tone and creamy white beside some olive green and brown on a dark background. The tones may have faded to some extent, yet the effect of this unique object is even today (if still preserved as it was before the war) remarkably rich, not to say colouristic. The paintings are distinguished by the precious characteristics of miniatures, though at the same time executed in a relatively broad pictorial manner. They would bear considerable enlargement without losing their artistic significance. These qualities and their relatively perfect state of preservation secure them a prominent place among the scanty remains of Han painting.

Han art, as it is known to us through objects in metal, clay and stone, is characterized by a rare combination of precious refinement and strength; and if we may base some general conclusions on the remains of pictorial art mentioned above, the same was true of painting in this period.

Ku K'ai-chih, Lu T'an-wei and some Early Landscape-painters

IN THE chronological scheme for the classification of painting proposed by Chang Yen-yüan, he calls the Han dynasties and the succeeding epoch of the Three Kingdoms (221-317) *shang ku*, i.e. the most ancient period. He repeats some of the traditional praise bestowed on Ts'ao Pu-hsing (c.222-277) who is said to have been the greatest master of the period, but adds: "nowadays there are no works by him". It seemed consequently quite futile to Chang Yen-yüan to attempt any characterization of that remote period from which, according to his own words, only names had been preserved, an opinion which certainly is no less justified today than it was in the ninth century. The general nature of Han painting may to some extent be deduced from paintings such as were mentioned in the preceding chapter, but we have no means of differentiating and identifying individual masters.

The earliest painters whose works actually could be seen and appreciated in the time of Chang Yen-yüan were Ku K'ai-chih (c.344-405) and Lu T'an-wei (c.440-500). Their pictures were at the time the most eagerly coveted art-treasures. "Everybody wants a Ku and a Lu", he writes; no one could claim to have a real collection of paintings without some specimens by these "classic" masters. Discussion regarding their respective merits had been going on ever since the time when Hsieh Ho wrote his *Ku hua-p'in lu* (c.500), and there had been some disagreement regarding their relative importance. Hsieh Ho and Li Ssü-hsün placed Lu T'an-wei above Ku K'ai-chih, whereas Yao Tsui and Chang Yen-yüan

reversed the order of the two. This comparative appreciation is, however, of little interest to us since no works by or after Lu T'an-wei are known. It may simply be noted that the characterization offered by Chang Yen-yüan of Lu T'an-wei has been accepted as the foundation for the painter's great renown: "He used the one-stroke manner in painting, which was continuous without a break; and from this we know that the same method may be used in writing and painting" (i.e. because the great calligraphist Wang Hsi-chih also was a master of "one-stroke-writing"). Lu T'an-wei's skill as a man of the brush is highly praised, but need not detain us at this place since no pictorial records of his have survived.

The situation is quite different in regard to Ku K'ai-chih; characteristic features of his personality have been transmitted in historical records and his artistic ideals and peculiarities may to some extent be observed in copies or close imitations of his paintings. These sources have furnished a welcome material to modern writers on Chinese paintings, and through their efforts Ku K'ai-chih has gradually become one of the most prominent figures in Chinese art-history.

The main source for our knowledge about Ku K'ai-chih's life and activity is a chapter in the dynastic history of the Chin dynasty, which though it was composed only at the beginning of the seventh century, comprises records which date back almost to the painter's own life-time. According to these he was born about 345 in Wu-hsi in



FIGURE 7. Men Travelling on Horseback and in a Cart. Copies of wall-paintings in a tomb at Liao-yang, South Manchuria.

Figs. 7 to 14 from photographs by The Union of Chinese Artists, Peking.



FIGURE 8. Two Heralds on horseback and Four Musicians seated on a mat in front of some dishes. Copies of wall-paintings in a tomb at Liao-yang.



FIGURE 9. Jugglers playing with discs and balls.
Copies of wall-paintings in a tomb at Liao-yang.



FIGURE 10. A cerberus and two men travelling in a cart.
Copies of wall-paintings in a tomb at Liao-yang.



FIGURE II. Portrait of a Bearded Officer and a section of an Ornamental Border.
Copies of wall-paintings in a tomb at Liao-yang.



FIGURE 12. Civil Officials in reverent attitudes of salutation. A White Hare below.
Wall-paintings in a tomb at Wang-tu, Hopei.



FIGURE 13. Military Officers and a Saluting Official. A Fawn below.
Wall-paintings in a tomb at Wang-tu, Hopei.

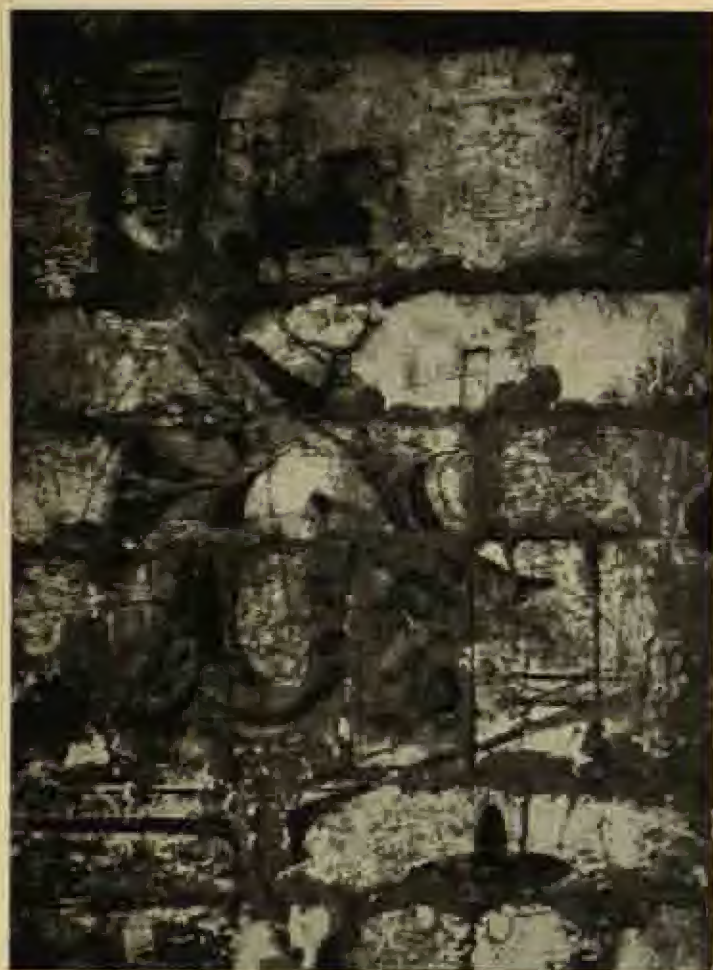


FIGURE 14. The Host seated on a platform; a Youth kneeling with a *kuei*-tablet in his hands. A horned Sheep and a Wine-jar below. Wall-paintings in a tomb at Wang-to, Hopei.

Kiangsu.¹ His *tzü* was Ch'ang-k'ang, but he became best known under the appellation Hu-t'ou (Tiger-head). He possessed "wide knowledge and the spark of genius".²

The Grand Marshal Huan Wên (312-373) made Ku his secretary "and treated him as an intimate friend". When he died, K'ai-chih worshipped at his tomb; and as he received some condolences for the loss of his friend, he said:

"My voice was the peal of thunder, shaking the hills; my tears were torrents of rivers, pouring into the sea."

At the very end of the fourth century he served as a secretary to the governor Yin Chung-k'an in Ching-chou (Hupei). Once the governor lent him a sailing boat to enable him to visit his home. But the wind grew too strong and the boat capsized; K'ai-chih wrote to the governor: "The place (where this happened) is called P'o-chung (Broken Tomb). The escape was truly like breaking out of entombment! But now the traveller is safe and sound, and the cloth sail intact." And he described the landscape seen on the way in enthusiastic terms.

"K'ai-chih excelled in painting with colours (red and green) and was particularly famous for his portraits. Hsieh An (a well-known statesman and art-lover of the time) valued his art highly and remarked: 'There has never been anything like this since the birth of man'. When painting portraits he often waited several years before he would touch in the pupils of the eyes. And when someone asked about the reason for this, he answered: 'The beauty or ugliness of the lines and body hold in fact no key to the subtle secret of art. It is just by those little spots that the spirit can be rendered and perfect likeness portrayed.'

"He admired Hsi K'ang's poems in lines of four syllables and used them for his paintings. He often said: 'It is easy to paint *The hand is plucking the five strings*; but difficult to represent *The eyes follow the wild geese on their homeward flight*.'"

He was unsurpassed as a portrait painter. "Once he painted a portrait of P'ei K'ai (a prominent

scholar and official) and added three hairs on the jaw, which made the beholder feel very strongly the sagacious character of the man. When he painted the portrait of Hsieh K'un (a scholar and musician) he placed the man among jutting crags and explained: 'This man himself said that among hills and valleys he showed to greater advantage, so I have thought best to put him among his hills and dales'."³

He also wanted to make a portrait of Yin Chung-k'an, but the gentleman objected vigorously as he had a disease of the eyes. Ku K'ai-chih insisted, however, and said: "Your Excellency, it is just on account of your eyes (that you should be painted). Would it not be most exquisite if the pupils were first painted bright and then touched over with *fei po* (flying white) like a thin veil of clouds over the moon?" Thereupon Chung-k'an consented.

"Ku K'ai-chih once entrusted to Huan Hsüan a box containing a number of his paintings, and pasted up the front of it with a label. Hsüan, however, opened the back of the box stealthily; took out all the pictures, had the box properly repaired and then returned it to K'ai-chih pretending that he had never opened it. When the painter saw that the chest was sealed with the original label, though the pictures were gone, he promptly said: 'Such marvellous works of art (as my paintings) are things bewitched; they have transformed themselves and vanished like men ascending to join the immortals'. He showed no surprise.

¹ The best-known translations of Ku K'ai-chih's biography in *Chin shu*, 92: 212-222, are 1. by Chavannes in *T'oung Pao*, V, 1904; 2. by Waley in *Introd. to the Study of Chinese Painting*, pp. 43-48, 1923; and 3. by Chen Shih-hsiang in No. 2 of *Chinese Dynastic Histories translations*, Berkeley 1953. The last one is the most complete and abundantly annotated; containing information about the various individuals mentioned in the biography, and also regarding the sources quoted in *Chin shu*, to wit, *Shih-shuo hsin-yü* (The Talk of the World) by Liu I-ch'ing (403-444), *Chung-hsing-shu* by Ho Fa-sheng, and *Hsi Chün-yang ch'ü* by T'ao Tao-lun, etc. Waley quotes the anecdotes re Ku K'ai-chih mainly from *Shih-shuo hsin-yü*, where they are more extensively related than in the *Chin Shu*.

² I have followed Chen Shih-hsiang's translation in most of the quotations.

³ Cf. Waley, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

"In the early days when he was serving under Huan Wên, it was said of him: 'K'ai-chih is compounded half of conscious buffoonery and half of madness; the two halves balance each other perfectly' (or, 'one cannot understand him without making allowance for both', Waley). Therefore, according to popular tradition, Ku K'ai-chih excelled ordinary men in three ways: as a wit, as a painter, and as a buffoon."

These are some of the anecdotes reported in the *Chün shu*, but beside these some other characteristic traditions referring to Ku K'ai-chih's works and ways have been transmitted in other books. Most remarkable among these is the one about how he assisted the monks of the Wa-kuan temple to raise money for rebuilding their main hall. Though quite a young and little-known painter at the time, he promised right away a contribution of 1,000,000 cash.¹ But when the money was to be paid, he said: "Give me first the opportunity of doing a picture in one of your pavilions". There he painted on the wall a full-length picture of the Buddhist saint Vimalakirti, and when he was on the point of putting in the eyes of the figure, he called the monks and said to them: "Visitors who come to see this picture should be made to pay on the first day an admission of 100,000 cash each, on the second day 50,000 each, and on the third day they may give what they like". When the doors of this pavilion were opened, the whole room seemed to be filled with a radiance from the picture; the crowd of visitors grew larger than could find place in the room, and the painter's promise was more than fulfilled.

The tradition about this extraordinary picture is repeated by several authors, including Chang Yen-yüan, who described it with expressions of deep admiration, as follows:² "I have seen a great number of pictures, but only in Ku's painting of An Old Sage has the mysterious fitness (highest reason) been realized. One may look at it for a whole day without getting tired. By concentration of the spirit and far-reaching meditation, one becomes aware of something self-evident (absolutely innate). The thing

(i.e. painting) and oneself are entirely forgotten; the realization is separated from the form. 'The body becomes like dry wood and the mind like dry ashes' (as said by Chuang-tzū). He reached the mysterious fitness which is called the Tao of painting."

Further information about this marvellous work, which seems to have possessed the significance or self-evidence of spiritual reality in appropriate pictorial transposition, is missing, but the above tradition should be remembered as one of the most eloquent descriptions of Ku's outstanding creative genius.

The only surviving pictures which to some extent may serve as supports for a characterization of Ku K'ai-chih's artistic genius are the handscrolls known as *The Nymph of the Lo River* (*Lo shên-nü*) and *The Admonitions of the Instructress of the Palace Ladies* (*Nü-shih chên*); to which may be added the *Illustrations of Eminent Women* (*Lieh-nü*). None of these pictures is an original work by the master or of his time, but they transmit more or less faithful versions of his designs, and such elements of his style as the imitating masters were able to grasp. But as they were executed at different epochs and by painters of unequal merits, they do not convey the impression of a homogeneous style. This disparity is certainly a complicating factor which serves to blur Ku K'ai-chih's artistic profile, and it may cause some doubts as to their relation with the lost originals by the master.

The appreciation of these pictures as documents for the study of Ku K'ai-chih's individual art is thus to no small extent based on hypotheses, partly supported by historical traditions, which, however, should not be pressed too far. Their exact relation to Ku K'ai-chih's lost works is still to some extent a matter of opinion, but however this may have been, they possess also considerable individual merits as examples of early stages in the development of Chinese painting.

It seems rather surprising that the two main

¹ Cf. Waley, *op. cit.*, p. 45, according to *Ching-shih sui-chi*.

² In *Li-tai ming-hua chi*, II, 3.

specimens among these copies or imitations after Ku K'ai-chih, the Lo-shên scrolls and the so-called Admonitions, represent not only different periods of execution but also divergent tendencies of style. The Lo-shên scrolls impress us by their general character as the more archaic, in spite of the fact that they seem to have been executed later than the Admonitions scroll in the British Museum.

The best and most complete version of the Lo Shên scroll forms part of the picture collection in the Palace Museum in Peking, while another excellent version is in the Freer Gallery in Washington which, however, is incomplete. The Peking picture has not been published in its entirety and my studies had to be limited to the relatively short section which was exhibited in Hui-hua kuan in 1954 (Pls. 9, 9A and 9B). Judging by this, I would describe the picture as stylistically akin to the scroll in the Freer Gallery, though executed by a more accomplished artist in a somewhat softer and more fluent manner. Both pictures seem to be works of the Sung period, probably from the early part of the twelfth century; their archaistic flavour is steeped in the gracefulness of Sung transcriptions.

The motif of these pictures is borrowed from a poem called The Nymph of the Lo River, written in A.D. 222 by the poet Ts'ao Chih. The illustrations to the successive scenes of the poem are represented in a continuous landscape, made up of puppet hills, plume-like trees and billowing waters, which forms the earthly stage for the dramatic personae, while dragons and fairies descending from the sky transmit the heavenly influences. These elements are rendered in a simplified naïve manner as symbolic type-forms rather than as representations from nature.

A comparison between the text, as rendered by Waley,¹ and the illustrations on the Freer Gallery scroll makes it evident that the beginning is here missing; it may exist on the Peking scroll, though I had no opportunity to see this portion of it, but from the bits that were shown, it became evident that the two versions include considerable differences

of detail in spite of their general correspondence.

The main emphasis of the illustrations is on the figures: The Lady of the Lo River, who charmed the poet, descending through the air in "silken flutterings of her light mantle"; the P'ing-i "beating his drum"; the fairy Nü-kua singing; "the dragons six abreast in flawless line, harnessed to the chariot of cloud"; "the crossing of the Northern rivulet in a large boat"; and finally a more idyllic scene in which the lady seems to bid farewell to the poet. She turns back, "moves her red lips . . . speaks of Love and the Great Chain that binds men heart to heart". These scenes have all been transferred to pictures, but the final words of the poet: "Alas, that between men and gods no converse can endure; alas, that they are vanished, those lusty days of mortal youth" – may have seemed too volatile to the artist for pictorial interpretation.

The text must have made a strong appeal to Ku K'ai-chih's poetic imagination, but to what extent he actually succeeded in transmitting the romantic atmosphere of the poem is difficult to tell from a copy executed six or seven hundred years later. It may indeed be asked: "Did Ku K'ai-chih's original picture still exist at that time, or were these copies based on secondary versions?" The question can no longer be answered, but it is evident that the copyists of the Sung period took great pains in rendering the characteristics of the archaic, or archaistic, models at their disposal. Their pictures are somewhat monotonous "primitives"; perfectly drawn in a kind of *kung pi* manner and carefully coloured in a harmony of greyish green and brownish red, but with very little of the romantic atmosphere and psychological overtones that we would expect in faithful renderings of Ku K'ai-chih's own creations.²

¹ *Op. cit.*, pp. 60, 61.

² The later version of the Lo Shên scroll belonging to the British Museum need hardly occupy us at this place, because it is altogether a very free transformation of the famous picture (possibly of the sixteenth century) in which the archaic character has been practically lost. But it is interesting from an illustrative point of view, because it includes more scenes than the early pictures. Some portions of another version of this picture are reproduced in Omura, *Bunjin Gassen*, II, 3, 4.

Better known than any of these versions of the Lo shên scroll is the famous picture in the British Museum which illustrates the Admonitions of the Instructress to the Palace Ladies, i.e. a moralizing text by the poet Chang Hua (232-300). It is a work of art of remarkable distinction which holds a place of its own in the history of Chinese painting, and it would probably not occur to an experienced critic that this picture could be a work by or after the same master who created the Lo shên scroll, yet the attribution is supported by important historical evidence and a long standing tradition.

Before entering into a discussion of the stylistic features of the Admonitions, it may be useful to recall a few of the data referring to the history of this picture.¹ The picture is not mentioned (like the Lo shên scroll) among the works of Ku K'ai-chih in the records of the T'ang period, such as *Li-tai ming-hua chi* and *Chên-kuan kung ssü hua-shih*, but in the Sung period it is entered under Ku K'ai-chih's name in *Hsüan-ho hua-p'u*. It formed part of the imperial collection, as confirmed by several Hsüan Ho seals, but there seems also to have existed another version of the Admonitions which is mentioned by Mi Fei in his *Hua shih*.² It is quite likely that some of the unidentified seals on the picture are of the T'ang period and also evident that it was considered a very early picture at the beginning of the Sung dynasty, but whether it was ascribed to Ku K'ai-chih before that date remains an open question. The signature of the painter and the text lines between the illustrative scenes are evidently posterior additions, written in a style that points to the Sung period. From that time onwards, it is repeatedly recorded by leading critics of the Ming and Ch'ing periods, such as Tung Ch'ü-ch'ang, An I-chou, and the emperor Ch'ien-lung, as a very distinguished work by Ku K'ai-chih, or, to quote the emperor, a work that "could not have been equalled by the strenuous efforts of a later artist".

It illustrates, as said above, a moralizing text in a succession of separate figure compositions divided by lines of text, which at some places encroach on the pictures.³ It is no longer quite complete; the first

two scenes which are mentioned in literary records are missing. The opening scene in the present picture illustrates the heroism of Lady Fêng, a concubine of the emperor Yüan-ti of the former Han dynasty. She rescued the emperor's life by interposing herself between him and a wild bear, which had broken loose at a combat of animals. The text has been torn off together with the preceding scenes, and the figures have been considerably mended and repainted. The two men who are attacking the animal with long spears appear somewhat awkward, and the little bear looks more frightened than dangerous.

The second picture illustrates the refusal of Lady Pan to ride in the same litter as the emperor Ch'êng-ti (32-37 B.C.), because she did not want to give cause to evil talk or distract the thoughts of the ruler. The emperor is seated in a litter which is carried by eight sturdy men in the company of a young beauty who is cuddling a kid(?), while Lady Pan is walking slowly behind the litter. Her dignified, not to say haughty, bearing reflects her disapproval of the imperial invitation, as also expressed in her raised hands. Only the face of the emperor is fully visible in the litter, but it is quite enough to convey his sentiments of surprise and diffidence; his eyes are fixed searchingly on the lady by the roadside and his mouth half-opened, as if speaking. The psychological connexion between these two figures is quite evident, revealing the intangible nerve of the motif.

No less important as evidence of the painter's art of characterization are the eight litter-bearers who

¹ The history and documentary records of the picture are related in detail by Waley, *op. cit.*, pp. 50-59.

² Ferguson, *op. cit.*, pp. 51-54, quotes a notice from Ch'ên Chi-ju's *Ni-hsi lu* about an early copy of the Admonitions said to be either of the T'ang or the Sung period, and also from Mi Fei's *Hua shih* referring to another copy of this scroll. He arrives at the conclusion that there were two versions of the same picture, one of which was brought to Europe and sold to the British Museum in 1903, while the other at that time remained in the Manchu Household collection.

³ Chang Hua's text has been translated into French by Chavannes. Cf. *T'oung Pao*, vol. X, 1909, and in English by Waley, *op. cit.*, pp. 50-56, and partly by Ferguson, *op. cit.*, pp. 49, 50.

are exerting themselves to the utmost as they stride along with the heavy burden on their shoulders. The effort is reflected in some of the faces and still more convincingly in their bodies and limbs, which bend and turn under the weight of the litter, while their feet are twisted into the most extraordinary positions as if they were dancing along. There is something burlesque or dramatic about them, that reminds us of Brueghel's gay peasants dancing at a kermess – in spite of all differences of motifs and the distance in time.

From a formal point of view the litter has apparently offered the most serious problem to the painter. It is shaped like a rectangular box on long poles under a kind of network awning or canopy which is stretched on a frame of bamboo poles and reaches also over some of the men in front. But as the painter also wanted to reveal something of the inside of this litter, he has pushed open the front and swung it, so to speak, in line with the side that is parallel to the picture plane. The perspective is not only reversed, but forcibly spread out towards the background, which creates the impression that the litter extends outward from the picture-plane rather than into it. But this somewhat forcible method has evidently enabled the painter to give a more complete presentation of the various elements of the motif.¹

The third scene illustrates the words: "In the universe is nothing that after it has reached exaltation is not brought down, and among living beings is none that after it has reached its apogee does not decline. When the sun has reached its mid-course, it begins to sink, and when the moon is full, it begins to wane. The rise to glory is like a heap of dust, the fall into calamity like the sudden rebound of a spring."

A good portion of the picture is filled by a mountain on which may be discovered some strange animals, birds and plants. At one side of the mountain is a flying crow, the symbol of the sun; while the symbol of the moon is represented by the hare pounding in a mortar. A man with a bow is kneeling

at the side of the mountain; he is aiming at the tiger hiding in the crevices, and the birds are scared. He may thus be said to represent the destructive force, and he is rendered with a perfect characterization of his movements and intentions, but on a scale out of proportion to the mountain. In other words, there is no attempt at a formal inter-relation between the hunter and the mountain; the two elements, which balance each other, are treated mainly as symbols, though with greatly varying degrees of realism. The primitiveness of the landscape is not simply a matter of proportion, but also the result of structureless drawing and empty forms.

The fourth scene, which by reason of its rather intimate character has become very popular, is explained as follows: "Men and women know how to adorn their faces, but there is none who knows how to adorn his character. Yet if the character is not adorned, there is danger that the rules of propriety may be transgressed. Correct your character, embellish it; strive to create holiness in your nature."

Two young ladies are occupied with various elements of their toilet; the one who is turned half-way towards the background is painting her eyebrows at a mirror in which her face is visible; the other is kneeling on a mat before a mirror-stand while a maid is dressing her long black hair. And as this group is turned half-way outwards, the movements or postures of the two ladies follow opposite diagonals in relation to the picture-plane, thus mutually contributing to elucidate the third dimension. This impression is also to some extent supported by the four large toilet boxes at the lower edge of the picture, which by their cubic forms mark a horizontal plane also indicated by the square mat under the figure group. But the balance or harmony between the objects and the figures has been somewhat disturbed by the retouching of the boxes with a dull black colour.

¹ An interesting analysis of the space construction in this and other scenes in the same scroll is given by W. H. Wells in his book *Perspective in Early Chinese Painting*, London 1935.

The fifth picture, the so-called Bed Scene, illustrates the following statement: "If the words that you utter are good, all men for a thousand *li* around will make response. But if you depart from this principle, even your bed-fellow will distrust you."

The stage is a large roofed bed enclosed by folding doors and draperies, placed diagonally in relation to the surface-plane of the picture. The drapery in front of the bed is lifted, and the young lady (empress?), who is seated in this roomy piece of furniture, is partly visible. The emperor, who is placed on a low bench in front of the bed and is turning backwards, is speaking with a reproachful expression to his bed-fellow. The psychological relation between the two figures is sufficiently obvious to attract our attention and make us accept the discrepancies in the positions of the figures and in the painter's attempts to render the well-enclosed stage. The bed is drawn in a kind of inverted perspective, emphasized particularly in the lines of the flat roof, which is seen from above and gives the impression of falling out of the picture, partly caused by the unequal height of the two end walls of the bed. Other concessions in the construction of the bed caused by the general striving for descriptive clearness, may be observed in our illustration without further insistence on the arbitrary adjustment of the angles and the disturbing proportions. These formal deficiencies can hardly be said to lessen the psychological expressiveness of the scene.

The sixth picture is preceded by a rather abstract exposition about honour and shame and the omniscience of the Divine Providence which did not lend itself easily to illustrations, but the very last line contains a quotation from *Shih ching*, which the painter found suitable for illustration: "Let your heart be as a swarm of locusts and your race shall multiply". The exhortation, which was originally pronounced in praise of Ning Wên's consort T'ai-sü, through whose great virtue harmony was established in the king's harem, has given the painter opportunity to represent the sovereign in company

with his consort and two concubines who are occupied in tending and educating their children. A separate group of two youngsters and a man who seems to be their teacher completes the composition, forming the apex of an equilateral triangle instead of receding into the background. The composition has, so to speak, been divided into two groups, placed on various levels and, by representing the figures on the upper level on a smaller scale than those below, the painter has indicated a gradual distance, though without any suggestion of a unified horizontal plane. But here again the formal defects are mitigated by the characterization of the figures and the psychological atmosphere.

The text to the seventh picture is mainly a defence of traditional Chinese polygamy; it says in part: "No one can endlessly please; affection cannot be for one alone; if it be so, it will end in disgust. When love has reached its highest pitch, it changes its object; for whatever has reached fullness must need decline. Such is the law. When one who is beautiful makes herself still more beautiful, she attracts some blame", etc. The attitude and gestures of the emperor, who is speaking to a graceful lady, indicate that he has decided to break the bonds of favour formerly existing. The composition is limited to the two figures, but nothing could be more expressive of the painful and yet so common dialogue that forms the subject of the picture. The eighth scene, which consists of a single kneeling lady, is a direct continuation of the preceding picture; it illustrates the words: "Keep an eager guard over your behaviour, thence happiness will come. Fulfil your duties calmly and respectfully, reflect before you act; by this you will win glory and fame."

To this is added the final scene, which represents the instructress writing down her admonitions for the benefit of two young ladies in front of her, or as explained in the words of the text: "Thus has the instructress, charged with the duty of admonition, thought good to speak to the ladies of the harem". As the painter has conceived her – a slender figure, stooping forward while writing on the tablet in her

hand – she is the most graceful of all these exquisite representatives of the imperial harem. Her movement is strictly controlled, as she is handling the writing-brush, yet at the same time expressive of perfect ease. The ornamental diadem on the high black coiffure makes her head look like a large flower on a bending stem rising from the gigantic mussel formed by the curving folds of her garment on the ground.

The scroll is thus a series of highly varied single scenes illustrating the sections of the text which have been filled in posteriorly between the pictures. There is no such continuous background or landscape as in the Lo shên scroll, yet a clearly perceptible decorative unity, or rhythmic *Leitmotif*, formed by the movements of the figures as reflected in the fluttering scarves and the long trails of the robes. The continuous flow of these lines transmits not only the actual movement but also the animation of the figures; it may be said to bridge over the intervals between the successive groups.

In painting these elements the artist has used a very fine brush, making lines as neat as the traces of a stylus, yet at the same time supple and elastic. The artistic expression is mainly dependent on the drawing; the colours are secondary, *i.e.* filled in between the lines, particularly as they appear now after the rather thorough restorations or retouching to which the picture has been subjected. Through these the uniform black of the ladies' rich coiffures has become heavy and dull, making them look almost like padded hoods; the brick red of some ribbons or borders has likewise been unduly accentuated, which disturbs the original harmony. A closer definition of how far the colours have been retouched and other elements of the picture have been modified by the successive repairs would require a technical examination which must be left to the experts in charge of this precious relic. Some authorities have claimed that about forty per cent of the picture as it exists today, is the result of later retouching, but others find this estimate exaggerated. However this may be, it must be admitted that the

linear definition of most of the figures and their facial expressions have escaped alterations and may thus serve as a basis for an appreciation of the style and artistic beauty of the picture.

The actual soul and fascination of these scenes – more easily felt than defined – is a result of the psychological characterization of the figures, expressed in the drawing of the eyes, the eye-lashes and the eye-brows, the smiling mouths and the red lips, the moustaches and similar details as well as of the movements and postures. No full-fledged realistically elaborated picture could be more complete or convincing in this respect, a fact that impresses one with increasing force the further one penetrates through the somewhat faded or restored places of the scroll. And the more one absorbs of its subtle fascination, the more difficult it becomes to explain the picture as an imitation after an archaic original similar to the Lo shên scroll.

The historical records to which reference was made above do not help us very much in our endeavour to establish the date and origin of this scroll. According to some seals, it existed in the T'ang period; when, in the Sung period, it entered the Hsüan-ho collection it was accepted as a work by Ku K'ai-chih. That is practically all that can be deduced from seals and documents in regard to its early history, but this scanty information is, as remarked above, also supported by the intrinsic characteristics of the picture as it exists today. The figures which are best preserved are characterized by a gracefulness and a soft opulence, particularly in the drawing of the garments, which make us recall rare examples of T'ang art in clay or ink-drawing. It is true that the material for comparison is insufficient for definite conclusions, but as far as it goes, it tends to support, rather than contradict, the hypothesis that the picture was done in the early part of the T'ang period. An earlier date seems to me less probable because the distance between this picture and figure paintings preserved on lacquer objects, tomb-tiles and stone-slabs from the third, fifth and early sixth centuries is more marked. All these early

figure paintings represent type-forms and conventional patterns not prevalent in the scroll under discussion. It is a mature work, representing a stage in the stylistic development which, as far as present knowledge goes, was not reached before the seventh century.

The question to what extent it actually transmits an original composition by Ku K'ai-chih, as claimed ever since the Sung period, is still more complicated. But if we admit the probability of the Sung tradition, it should at the same time be admitted that the executing painter has treated his model with considerable freedom and rendered the figures in accordance with his own sense of grace and refinement. To what extent the picture is to be accepted as an example of Ku K'ai-chih's style is indeed a question that may be differently answered, but the tradition is also in this case an important element that should not be neglected. We have consequently dwelt on the picture with some care, trying to emphasize its exceptional artistic importance as an example of a stylistic tradition that probably goes back to Ku K'ai-chih.

Ku K'ai-chih's name is also connected with certain writings on painting, one of them concerning the methods of making copies or tracings, and the other dealing with certain elements of landscape-painting. But these writings have been preserved only in corrupt fragments (reported in *Li-tai ming-hua chi*, II, 5). The contents of the former are highly technical and interest us mainly as proofs of the fact that copying and tracing were already well advanced methods in the fourth century, but it also contains some remarks on portrait painting, conforming with the stories about Ku K'ai-chih's own portraits which we have quoted in part. The other essay is a rather detailed description of a Taoist picture called The Cloud Terrace Mountain (*Yün-t'ai shan*), in which the "heavenly master", Chang Tao-ling, is represented among awe-inspiring peaks and bottomless ravines adored by two disciples. It reflects a highly imaginative interpretation of certain elements of landscape-painting, but can

hardly be taken as a proof of Ku K'ai-chih's importance as an accomplished landscape painter. He may have taken some interest in certain effects of nature, but we have no reason to suppose that he used them otherwise than as accessory motifs in the background of his figure compositions.¹

The discussion regarding Ku K'ai-chih's importance as a painter flickered up all through the fifth century. Hsieh Ho, who wrote his *Ku hua-p'in lu* at the end of the century, placed Ku K'ai-chih in the third class of the old painters with the verdict that "his style was fine and subtle, his brush without a flaw, yet his workmanship was inferior to his ideas, and his fame surpassed his real merit". This classification provoked, however, a protest from Yao Tsui, who wrote about half a century later in *Hsiu hua-p'in*: "Hsieh Ho's words that 'his fame surpassed his merits' are really depressing, and his way of placing Ku in one of the lower classes is something still more disappointing. This was caused by his own erratic feelings (towards the various painters) and had nothing to do with the merits or defects of their actual paintings. The saying: 'He who sings well will have few in harmony with himself', is true not only in reference to ballad singers; and one may weep blood over false reports, not only concerning the genuine jade."² It seems to

¹ According to the records of Ku K'ai-chih's works established by authors of the T'ang and Sung dynasties, they were practically all figure compositions, i.e. representations of famous characters of ancient history, Buddhist saints, Taoist worthies, and portraits of contemporaries, beside illustrative pictures inspired by legends and poems such as Making a Lute and Tending Sheep, and studies of animals and birds. His *œuvre* must have been quite comprehensive, the result of a keen interest not only in human nature but in the life of all animated nature. Among the pictures ascribed to him, beside those mentioned above, should be remembered two handscrolls in Chinese collections, i.e. a version of the Illustrious Women (in Hui-hua kuan, Peking), the other a free copy of The Making of the Lute (in a private collection), but their stylistic connexion with Ku K'ai-chih seems rather distant.

² Reference to the story about Pien Ho, a man of the Ch'u state in the eighth century B.C. who found a piece of unpolished jade on Ching-shan, but tried in vain to convince the ruler of its value. He was treated as an impostor, which caused him deep sorrow and tears of blood, but finally rehabilitated when the stone had been polished and found to be true. Cf. Giles, *Biogr. Dict.*, 1650.

me that Hsieh Ho, in his attempt at classification, has thrown reason to the wind and ruined it forever."

The same opposition to Hsieh Ho's classification of Ku K'ai-chih among the relatively inferior painters is repeated in the preface to *Hsü hua-p'in lu*, supposed to be by a writer of the T'ang period called Li Ssü-chên (c.689), though made up later of bits borrowed from Yao Tsui and others. But when Chang Yen-yüan in the ninth century once more reconsidered the question of Ku's artistic standing, he took a somewhat different view, expressed as follows: "On examining Hsieh Ho's criticism carefully, I find it absolutely just and correct, and I cannot agree with some of the verdicts of Yao Tsui and Li Ssu-chên."

It may, however, be questioned whether any of these writers based his opinion on an actual study of the master's works. Yao Tsui refers to "historical records", but to no existing paintings, and Chang Yen-yüan seems to have drawn his conclusions mainly from the report that Ku K'ai-chih had a great admiration for his older contemporary Wei Hsieh. The traditions handed down from generation to generation and recorded by men who did not hesitate to repeat as their own verdicts what they had read or heard, form an interesting literary background but hardly a safe foundation for a critical study of the development of painting at the time of Ku K'ai-chih.

* * *

It is no longer possible to decide to what extent Ku K'ai-chih actually surpassed the other painters of his time, but if we may believe the early recorders mentioned above, there were several painters active in the fourth and fifth centuries, mostly in Nanking, the capital of the Eastern Chin (317-420), and of the Liu Sung (420-478) and the Ch'i (479-501) dynasties, who not only equalled but surpassed Ku K'ai-chih in their art. They are mentioned with various degrees of traditional praise, but not characterized in a way that would make them stand

out with distinct individual profiles. Thus, for instance, Hsieh Ho bestows much encomium on Wei Hsieh, Hsiün Hsü and Chang Mo, whom he places in the same top class as Lu T'an-wei, but gives no indications of their pictures. Other painters of traditional fame like Ku Chün-chih, Yüan Ch'ien, Tai K'uei, Chiang Sêng-pao, Tsung Ping and Wang Wei, to mention only a few, are placed by him in lower classes and more succinctly characterized.

The two last, however, are to us something more than just names, not because any pictures by them have been preserved, but on account of certain discussions on landscape painting reported by Chang Yen-yüan and attributed to Tsung Ping and Wang Wei respectively. These short essays have survived in somewhat corrupt and fragmentary forms, but the ideas that they transmit may well be of the period, and they are interesting in so far as they reflect a romantic feeling for nature and a faculty of observation that mark a more advanced stage in the development of landscape painting than can be traced, for instance, in the pictures connected with the name of Ku K'ai-chih.

Tsung Ping is said to have been an excellent *ch'in* player as well as a good painter.¹ He loved to stroll about among the mountains in Wu and Ch'u (i.e. south of the river) and lived for some time in a hut on Hêng-shan (in Hunan), but when he grew old and weak he returned to Chiang-ling (in Hupeh) where he spent the rest of his life.

"He said with a sigh: 'Now I am old and sick; I am no more able to stroll about in the wonderful mountains, but I can purify my bosom so that even when lying down I may ramble among the mountains (in my thoughts)'; and so he transformed his former travels into pictures on the walls. Whether seated or lying down he always faced the pictures; such was his noble nature. At the age of sixty-nine he composed a preface to landscape painting in which he said:

¹ *Li-tai ming-hua chi*, VI, 2.

"The Divine Sages hold Tao within themselves and respond to (penetrate into) things; the Virtuous purify their thoughts (hearts) and contemplate the images (appearances). As to landscapes, they have material substance, but their message is spiritual. Therefore Hsüan Yüan, Yao K'ung, Kuang Ch'eng, Ta K'uai, Hsü Yu, Ku Chu, and others of their kind¹ travelled among the mountains of K'ung-t'ung, Chü-tz'ü, Miao-ku, Chi-shou and Ta-mêng.² This has been spoken of as the pleasure of the Virtuous and the Wise.³ While the Divine Sages follow Tao through their spirit, the Wise ones understand landscapes by the beauty of their forms (which contains) Tao. Is not the pleasure of the Virtuous quite similar?

"I am longing for the Lu and Hêng mountains,⁴ and I am far away from Ching and Wu. Old age has taken me unaware. I am ashamed that I cannot concentrate my vitality and restore the health of my body; I am distressed to have fallen into the Shih-men class.⁵ Now I can only do my paintings, spread colours and draw cloud-capped mountains. The proper principles were lost (cut short) before the middle ancient period, but they may be found again after a thousand years. The most subtle things are beyond words and images, but the mind (heart) may grasp them in the scriptures. Yet how much more is it not so in regard to places where one has been in the body and seen with the eyes. Then one can render forms with forms and colours with colours. But as the K'un-lun mountain is very large and the pupils of my eyes are small, it is difficult for the eyes to discern it completely at close range; only when the distance is several *li*, can the mountain be completely taken in even by the small pupils of the eyes. It is evident that the further away one moves the smaller become the things that one sees.

"Now as I stretch the silk and represent far away things on it, even the form of the K'un-lun mountain can be completely rendered within a square inch. A vertical stroke of three inches equals a height of 8000 feet, and a horizontal stroke of five

feet takes in a distance of 100 *li*. When one examines a picture one may feel dissatisfied if the likeness is not skilfully rendered, but not because of its small size if it transmits correctly the likeness (or the effect) of nature. Thus the beauty of the Sung and the Hua mountains and the mysterious gorges may be completely rendered in a picture.

"If you satisfy your eyes and make the heart (thoughts) respond according to the principle and achieve likeness by skill, then all eyes will be satisfied and all hearts respond; and as they are satisfied and responsive, the spirit will be moved, and when the spirit is aroused, the proper thing (right principle) is attained. Even though one returns again to seek out the mysterious defiles, what more could one add?

"The spirit as such has no clue (attachment), but when dwelling in a form it affects the likeness. The right principle is to make it enter the outlines of the image; if one can draw these perfectly, the whole thing is really accomplished.

"Thus, in living leisurely and regulating the vital breath, in cleaning the wine-cup, in playing the *ch'in*, in opening (unrolling) a picture in seclusion, and in meditating on the four quarters of the world, I do not repudiate the inspiration (urge) of Heaven but respond in my solitude to the call of the wilderness, where no man lives, but cliffs and peaks rise to dazzling heights and cloudy forests are dense and vast.

"The Divine Sages and Virtuous men of countless ages have found endless pleasure in it (this attitude) and made it part of their spirit and mind. What more

¹ The names refer to Taoists of legendary fame, such as Huang-ti, the emperor Yao, and Hsü Yu, who was one of the four philosophers on the Miao-ku mountain, the abode of the Immortals in P'ei-hai.

² Ta-mêng is a name used for the far off western frontiers but, like the rest of these names, it is more legendary than geographical.

³ Reference to the *Analeks*, Book VI, Chapt.21: "The wise find pleasure in water, the virtuous find pleasure in hills".

⁴ Lu-shan in Kiangsi, Hêng-shan in Hunan.

⁵ Useless, attempting the impossible. Cf. *Analeks*, Book XIV, Chapt.41.

can I do? I too find pleasure in the spirit. Is there anything better than this joyfulness of the spirit?"

* * *

The fate of the ailing painter who in his retirement kept on creating substitutes for the grand works of nature which he no longer was able to contemplate in objective reality may indeed impress us as almost tragic, but to himself – if we may judge by his own words – it seemed different. The somewhat painful situation became to him an opportunity, or an incentive, to search for another road of approach to the cloud-capped mountains, the roaring streams and wind-swept pines which he had seen and absorbed during the contemplative wanderings of former years.

While he continued to stretch the silk and spread the colours the essential problem was no longer to him to represent convincingly the outward likeness of grand motifs, but to grasp their intrinsic life, the abiding character impressed on the sensitive film of his soul. His physical inability did not cause him to "repudiate the inspiration of Heaven" (or Nature). On the contrary, it made him long for it more than ever, he felt more anxious than ever to reach down into sources whence alone sprang a truly creative inspiration. He tells us how he tried to make himself – body, soul and spirit – more open to it and more capable of transmitting it by living leisurely and regulating the vital breath, by cleaning the wine-cup, playing the *ch'in*, and practising meditation.

These methods were by no means new or extraordinary; they had been tried and practised since time immemorial by men in search of Tao, the spiritual heart or well-spring of their own being, a search pursued by those who felt the need of deeper knowledge and more permanent values than they could find in the world of sensual experiences. Who were these men? They were the forerunners and creators in the field of thought and art, the sages

and virtuous men of countless ages who found peace and endless pleasure in this search, this path of spiritual exploration, as indicated by the old painter, who winds up by exclaiming: "What more can I do!" – i.e. to find consolation for the tired soul and guidance for the longing of his heart . . . This search brought him as a final guerdon "The joyfulness of the spirit".

His words may be vague, but they have the ring of personal experience and become consequently more convincing and significant than some of the lengthy Taoist dissertations on landscape-painting of later times. He is convinced he has found the solution of problems that occupied scores of Chinese painters in later ages and may as such be called the first representative of the kind of art that became known as *Wên-jên hua* (the cultured man's painting).

We need not enter into descriptions of this kind of painting at this place, nor try to reconstruct the pictorial characteristics of Tsung Ping's lost works (which may have been less advanced than his theoretical attitude), but it should be remembered that he also inserted in his essay a few technical notes referring to the representation of large objects in small pictures, and the proper way of rendering space and distance in landscapes, observations which also seem to be based on his personal experience and practice as a painter.

* * *

The same philosophical attitude based on Taoist ideas as that expressed by Tsung Ping is also to be found in Wang Wei's remarks on landscape-painting. But they are transmitted in a more fragmentary and corrupt form than the notes by the older painter. The general trend of thought expressed by these two landscape painters makes it indeed evident that the romantic sentiment for nature and the endeavour to transmit it convincingly in paintings had reached a remarkable degree of development at the time. But alas, even this is a supposition based mainly on literary and philosophical deductions.

The Six Dynasties and the Sui Period

I

Notes on History and Religion

WITH THE accession of the Liang dynasty in Nanking (502-556) a new impetus was given to the arts and letters, particularly in the religious field. The founder of the dynasty, the emperor Wu-ti (502-549), started as a strict Confucianist and spent, to begin with, large sums on temples and schools wherein the sacred writings of the great sage were studied, by which no doubt the standards of the officials' class were raised and broadened. But this did not satisfy him for more than a few years. He turned to Buddhism, which offered a larger scope for the devotion of this remarkable monarch. He sent messengers to the Western countries for teachers to instruct his people in Buddhism; and the result was that in the course of time more than three thousand bonzes assembled in the capital and temples were erected all over the country. Wu-ti's personal devotion grew concurrently with the spread of the new religion, and in 528 he withdrew voluntarily from the direction of public affairs to spend his days as a common bonze in the Monastery of Harmonious Peace, which he had built at great expense in the capital. But as this withdrawal proved dangerous to the stability of the state, Wu-ti was obliged after a while to listen to the entreaties of his ministers and return to the life in the palace. Yet his desire to live in seclusion far from the ceremonious pomp of the court proved stronger as time went on, and caused him to repeat the experiment of withdrawal twice in later years. He ended his days as a simple monk in the Monastery of Harmonious Peace (550).

Chinese historians are no doubt right when they claim that the monarch's religious fervour became a

source of danger to the stability of the state and caused confusion in the government. The fact is that Wu-ti represented a rather advanced type of humanism, particularly in his endeavour to introduce certain Buddhist principles in the administration, as, for instance, the prohibition against killing any living thing. By this not only a great number of animals formerly used in official sacrifices, but also criminals were saved from death, a (merciful but mistaken) policy which tended to upset the morals and the traditional principles of justice in China.

Wu-ti's active interest in Buddhism became a cultural factor of considerable importance, not only in his own realm but also in wider circles. From Nanking influences radiated to other parts of China as well as to Korea and Japan, where Buddhism at this time opened the way for a new wave of cultural florescence. Wherever it reached it brought with it an increasing interest in literature and art, stimulating activity in the field of building and sculpture and inspiring directly or indirectly the more imaginative and subtle arts of painting and writing. One of the best-known testimonies of the literary activity at the Liang court is the *Wên hsüan*, a large collection of selected writings in prose and poetry compiled by the emperor's eldest son Hsiao T'ung, who was widely known for his noble and romantic character. The artistic development that followed in the wake of Buddhism is amply testified in the records about several of the painters mentioned below.

One of the most memorable events in the religious history of China during the reign of Wu-ti was the arrival of the Indian patriarch Bodhidharma

(in Chinese, Ta-mo) in about 520 or 526. He gave the impulse to a trend of thought and an attitude towards nature and art which in later times bore rich fruits in the field of painting. In his famous interview with the emperor Wu-ti, which is described in a Chinese book of doubtful date but highly characteristic tendency, he pointed out that spiritual insight and deliverance could not be obtained by the study of books or by prayers and good works, nor could real knowledge be communicated by words: it is intuitive and can only be obtained through meditation. The vision which brings light and deliverance comes in a moment as naturally as the opening of a flower or the reflection of a star in a mountain lake. The only true reality is the Buddha-nature in the heart of every man, the individualized ray of a universal divine essence to which Bodhidharma like all the great Mahayana teachers was pointing.

According to the story, the stern and taciturn Indian patriarch had not much success in his attempt to convince the Chinese emperor that all the good works and the wealth that he lavished on the Buddhist congregations and the temples were of no avail in a spiritual sense. Yet, the message that he was preaching was in harmony with an old and deep current of Chinese thought. It had been expressed by great philosophers of antiquity, such as Lao-tzū, and applied in Taoist practices and institutions. There may not have been a great many at the time who fully realized the import of Bodhidharma's teaching, but as time went on it struck root in wider circles and produced rich harvests by a gradual, if not continuous development which we shall have occasion to observe at several important junctures in the history of Chinese painting. Bodhidharma's teaching which, to quote Sir Charles Eliot,¹ "imparted a special tone and character to a section (though not the whole) of Far Eastern Buddhism", became known in China as Ch'an (i.e. Dzyan=Dhyāna), in Japan as Zen.

Beside this meditative school there were, however, other forms of Buddhism which, during the process of assimilation in China, were also modified

to accord with earlier religious traditions of the country. Some of them were coloured by Taoist ideas, others were brought into harmony with the traditional ancestral worship of the Chinese people, whereas Buddhist painting in China became an almost independent form of art connected by its iconography with its Indian sources but very free in its artistic transpositions of the imported motifs (an independence still more noticeable in some of the Buddhist sculptures of the same period).

The inspiration offered by Buddhist philosophy and religion to further artistic development was to no small extent cast into earlier native moulds which in spite of all modifications remained more Chinese than Indian. On the other hand, it may be remembered that when the Taoists instituted their temples and places of worship and felt the need of hieratic images in painting and sculpture, they did not hesitate to adopt with slight changes Buddhist models of the kind. Buddhism offered to the Chinese, to quote Sir Charles Eliot, "ideals suited to the artistic temperament; peace and beauty reigned in its monasteries, its doctrine that life is one and continuous is reflected in that love of nature, that sympathetic understanding of plants and animals, that intimate union of sentiment with landscape which marks the best Chinese pictures". In other words, the Chinese appropriated and developed such elements of Buddhist religion and philosophy as appealed to their temperament in particular, but they would never have been able to give such noble expression to them, had they not been prepared for the task by earlier experiences in the field of religious thought and by their traditional conception of art as a symbolic means of communicating spiritual ideas. The consequence was that some of the leading painters of the early periods represented with equal success Bodhisattvas and Taoist Immortals in forms which showed little differences except in external attributes.

It should also be remembered that the pictures inspired by Taoist or Buddhist philosophy or

¹ Cf. *Hinduism and Buddhism*, vol. III, p. 253 ff., London 1921.

religion consisted by no means only of devotional images or illustrative paintings for the moral education of the common crowd; they included also representations of stellar divinities or heavenly rulers of various kinds, preferably in Taoist guise, but sometimes also representing beings or forces of the Mahayana pantheon. We find such representations listed among the works of painters like Chang Sêng-yu and Chan Tzû-ch'ien at the side of pictures of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. The motifs were derived from different sources or sections of thought, but the pictorial representations were equally estimated by the Chinese painters and art lovers. They were after all less interested in the iconographic definition of the legendary or symbolic figures than in the artistic interpretation of the spiritual significance of the motifs, which could be rendered with many individual variations. In this, as in so many other fields of creative activity, one may notice the extraordinary faculty of the Chinese to assimilate ideas from various sources, and of imprinting them, when expressed in symbols of art, with their own unmistakable characteristics.

* * *

The cultural prosperity which existed in Nanking during the heyday of Liang Wu-ti came to an end during the last years of the old monarch and was practically wiped out in the time of his sons Chien Wên-ti (550-551) and Yüan-ti (552-555). The decisive blow to this epoch of peace and benevolent humanism was dealt by the unscrupulous adventurer Hou Ching (502-552), who for some time succeeded in playing his treacherous games alternately with the Eastern Wei and the Liang governments. Benefiting by the confidence of the too credulous old ruler, he succeeded finally in occupying the capital by a ruse and deposing Wu-ti. We are, however, told that when Hou Ching came into the presence of Wu-ti (who then was eighty-six years old) "he was so overcome with the calm and majestic appearance of the monarch that a fear came over him, and kneeling down he did obeisance to

him". The only remark that the emperor made to him was: "I am afraid you must be weary with your long stay in the camp and the great labour it has cost you to destroy my kingdom". . . The words were mild, but the reproach went home. When Hou Ching came out from the interview he remarked to one of his officers: "I have led thousands of men into battle, and I have charged the enemy at the head of my cavalry, and I never felt the least fear. But today, when I got into the presence of the old man, I could not restrain the feelings of fear that came over me. Truly, he is awe-inspiring, and I will never venture into his presence again."¹

Hou Ching spared himself any further experiences of the kind by starving the old monarch to death within a few months and placing a younger member of the family on the throne for the time being as a figure-head, but as he too proved unsatisfactory to the rebel, he was murdered within a year. Another makeshift was tried for a while but proved no more satisfactory; Hou Ching was, as a matter of fact, not only feared but detested, and it was a great relief to the whole population of the realm when he finally (552) was defeated by the old Liang general Ch'ên Pa-hsien. Wu-ti's seventh son quietly ascended the throne under the name of Yüan-ti, but as Nanking had suffered much during the occupation of the rebels, he moved his capital to Chiang-ling in Hupeh. The emperor was a man of great learning and had the same interest in the humanities as his father, but he was more inclined towards Taoism than towards Buddhism. He had accumulated a very large collection of books, writings and pictures, and it was his delight – in the retirement of the Taoist temple where he found his favourite residence – "to dream away his days in musings over the mysteries of the faith that he so much loved". In the meantime the affairs of the state went from bad to worse. When the army of the Western Wei state stood at the gates of his capital, he ordered that his whole collection of one hundred and forty thousand books (and paintings?) should be burnt and,

¹ Cf. *The Imperial History of China* (Shanghai 1906), p. 244.

breaking his sword in two, he sent his submission to the conqueror. According to other accounts he wanted to throw himself into the fire too so as to be consumed together with his beloved books.

These turbulent political events did not pass without some serious repercussions in the history of art, as may be easily imagined from what we know about the Liang emperors' keen activities as collectors and patrons of painting. Chang Yen-yüan refers to this very explicitly in his account of the vicissitudes of the imperial picture collections in China; and, to judge by his way of presenting the matter, it seems that the almost complete destruction of the Liang emperor's collection was the greatest loss in the field of painting before the T'ang period. To quote:¹

"Liang Wu-ti added many valuable and rare things and was always trying to complete the (imperial) collection. Yüan-ti was very accomplished and talented in the arts; he was himself a good painter. Precious and rare old things were accumulated in the storehouse of the palace.

"At the time of Hou Ching's rebellion, Prince Kang dreamt several times of Ch'ü (Shih-) huang, and that all the books were once more burnt. And it really happened so: several hundred cases of pictures from the palace were burned by Hou Ching. When peace was re-established after Hou Ching, all the pictures still left were transported to Chiang-ling and then destroyed by general Yü Chin of Western Wei. When Yüan-ti was about to abdicate, he brought together all the most famous pictures, calligraphies and classic books (some 2,400,000 pieces in all) and ordered a servant of the inner apartment Kao Shan-pao to burn them. The emperor wanted to throw himself into the fire, to burn with the pictures, but a palace lady seized him by his gown and saved him. He took the precious swords from Wu and Yüeh and tried to break them against a pillar, exclaiming 'Oh, that the Hsiao family at last should have come to this! Learning and culture shall not survive this night'.

"Yü Chin took out of the ashes more than 4000

books and paintings and brought them to Ch'ang-an. Therefore Yen Chih-t'ui wrote a song called *Kuan wo shêng* (in which he said): 'Millions of people were captured and enslaved, a thousand cartloads of books went up in smoke'.² Nothing like this has ever been known in history. All literature and learning was destroyed without a trace."

While these tragedies were enacted in Nanking, no less momentous events took place in northern China which, since the end of the fourth century, had been under the rule of the Northern Wei dynasty (c.398-532), formed by the T'o-pa Tartars, a people of Turco-Mongolian origin who had penetrated into China from the north-west. Their first centre of government was in Ta-t'ung in Shansi, but in 498 they moved down to Lo-yang, the old eastern capital of China, and assimilated gradually more and more of the Chinese culture and mode of life. The later rulers of this foreign dynasty were as a matter of fact no less anxious than the native princes to revive and further the cultural traditions of the Middle Kingdom. Most of them were devoted Buddhists, active in propagating this religion by establishing institutions of learning, where teachers from India and Central Asia were welcomed, and great centres of worship for the crowd. Buddhism spread rapidly over the northern provinces and there became for a while more dominant than "South of the River", partly owing to the fact that the undergrowth of earlier philosophical and religious teachings was less luxuriant in the north than in the south.

The most imposing record of this religious enthusiasm still existing is the great mass of Buddhist sculpture partly in the form of memorial stelae or single figures and partly consisting of rock-hewn

¹ From *Li-tai ming-hua chi*, I, Chapt.2, "The Rise and Fall of Painting".

² This seems to refer to the manner in which the commander of the Western Wei army rewarded his soldiers after the victory over the Liangs; he distributed more than thirty thousand men and women among them who were to be their slaves. They were taken away to Ch'ang-an and sold as slaves throughout the country and treated in the most cruel way imaginable.

statues in the cave temples made under the rule of the Northern and Western Wei rulers. Much of it has been lost through wanton destruction, but even the mutilated remnant, still to be seen at places like Yün-kang and Lung-mên, and further towards the west at Mai-chi shan and P'ing-ling ssü, is more important than the religious sculptures from any other part of the Middle Kingdom. The output of painting was probably correspondingly rich, but of this hardly anything remains except the wall-paintings in the cave temples at Tun-huang and P'ing-ling ssü to which we will return presently. The intense artistic activity which followed in the wake of the early wave of Buddhist inspiration that swept over the Northern Wei country, was however a relatively isolated occurrence of little importance for the evolution of painting at the old centres.

The Northern Weis came to an inglorious end in about 534, when the country over which they had ruled was divided between two secondary branches of the old T'o-pa clan, known as the Eastern and the Western Wei. These short-lived dynasties played, for a decade or two, leading parts in the political game and were both instrumental in weakening the hegemony of Liang Wu-ti, but they had no deeper roots in the country and were easily displaced, the Eastern Wei by the founder of the Northern Ch'i dynasty (in 550) and the Western by the Northern Chou dynasty in about 557. But the imperial throne in Nanking, which became vacant at the same juncture of time through the final extinction of the Liang house, was occupied by the Ch'ên dynasty (557-587).

Some of the rulers of these new northern dynasties were active in promoting the Buddhist and Taoist religions and the figurative arts in their service, but others like Wu-ti of Northern Chou (561-577) had no use whatsoever for the mystical faiths and their artistic imagery. To him as a stern Confucianist they were merely superstition. The founder of Northern Ch'i, Wên-hsüan-ti, found it too much of a waste to support two religions, and consequently, in order

to make a choice between Taoism and Buddhism, called the leaders of both parties to bring forth the best arguments they could on behalf of their faiths. As this disputation resulted in a victory for the Buddhists, the Taoist priests were ordered on pain of death to shave their heads and become bonzes, and according to the records, they all submitted to the order with the exception of four who preferred to die as martyrs of their faith. One of the later monarchs of the same dynasty, Wên-kung (565-575), found the most conspicuous expression for his religious devotion in the habits of a mendicant monk; he went around with the begging bowl asking support for the monastic institutions. But it was not only Buddhist art and learning which enjoyed favours at Yeh, the city near the border between Honan and Hopei where the Ch'i princes resided, also the decorative arts and secular painting found here support and protection.

Among the painters recorded by Chang Yen-yüan may be noticed several belonging to the "near ancient period", who were active at the courts of the Northern Ch'i emperors or in their state, as for instance Yang Tzū-hua, T'ien Sêng-liang, Liu Shakuai, and Ts'ao Chung-ta, and also somewhat younger men like Tung Po-jên, Chan Tzū-ch'ien, Sun Shang-tzū, Chéng Fa-shih and Yang Ch'i-tan who started in the Pei Ch'i dynasty but did most of their work under the Sui emperors and therefore are placed by Chang Yen-yüan in the "modern" period. They have all been accorded prominent places in the documentary history of Chinese painting, but before we turn our attention to a few of them, it may be desirable to add some information about the historical events which led to the unification of the whole of China under the Sui emperors.

The successful political work of the first Emperor Wên-ti, or Sui Kao-tsu (581-604) laid the foundation for a revival and concentration of the nation's forces also in the fields of religion and art. It has been said that the founder of the new dynasty used Buddhism as one of the means for restoring the

unity of the empire. His zeal for erecting and restoring temples and for their decoration with statues and paintings must have been extraordinary. According to the traditional records, no fewer than 3792 new temples were built and 106,580 statues of gold, silver, sandal-wood, ivory and stone were made for the sanctuaries; other buildings and statues were restored and many temples, no doubt, redecorated with wall-paintings. Religious painting received a strong impetus during the early part of this powerful new dynasty, and from the little we know about the general stylistic development during these years, it seems evident that the Buddhist paintings of the Sui period must have been not only hieratically imposing but also in a formal sense further developed than the rather linear manner of the preceding periods. The painters were apparently aiming at effects of relief and of pictorial illusion which hitherto had been only slightly developed. In other words, the foundations were laid for the strong plastically developed style of the great T'ang painters.

The preponderance of religious art during the early part of the Sui dynasty should not make us forget that there were, as noted above, many prominent painters who devoted themselves to various kinds of profane subjects, such as portraits, animals, buildings and landscapes. Pictures of these kinds were evidently becoming more frequent in the Sui period than before, as we shall find in the records of some of the painters' works.

The western capital in Shensi became now "The Great Flourishing City" (*Ta-hsing ch'eng*) and was laid out on a large scale with straight streets running north-south and east-west, special quarters for the imperial residences, and offices and temples and parks enclosed by walls; it was the foundation of Ch'ang-an, the "City of Long Peace", which then, during the early years of the T'ang dynasty, became the great capital of the Eastern hemisphere. The emperor Wên-ti's activities were mainly absorbed by the political reorganization, but he also took a personal interest in the religious reforms – supported by

important new translations of the Buddhist scriptures – and gave, at least indirectly, the impulse to a growing national renaissance in the field of the figurative arts and the written language.

Wên-ti's son Yang-ti was not a personality as well balanced and purposeful as the founder of the dynasty. He failed completely in his political adventures in Korea and elsewhere but his interest in the fine arts, and particularly in painting, was evidently developed to a higher degree than that of his father. He is said to have been very fond of court festivals and spectacular decorations and to have lavished fabulous sums on the magnificent boats in which he was wont to travel along the canals with all his court. In other words, he had a use for the decorative and pictorial arts and was consequently also active in reorganizing the imperial picture collection which, as told by Chang Yen-yüan in the passage quoted above, had suffered such serious devastation at the fall of the Liang dynasty. The further vicissitudes of this central treasury of paintings in China are reported by the same author in the following words. They are quoted here as a further testimony of the emperor Yang-ti's interest in the matter.

"In the T'ien-chia era of the Ch'ên dynasty (560–565) the emperor Ch'ên Wên-ti did his utmost searching for more pictures, and he got together a fair number. When Sui conquered Ch'ên (c. 580) two official recorders, P'ei Chü¹ and Kao Chiung, were appointed to take care of them. They collected more than 800 scrolls.

"The emperor Wên-ti of Sui built two terraces behind the Kuan-wên tien in the Eastern Capital (Loyang). The one to the east was called the Miao-k'ai t'ai (Wonderful Patterns Tower) and served for the conservation of old writings, while the one to

¹ A trusted official of the Sui emperor who was charged by Yang-ti with the trade relations between China and Central Asia. "He encouraged the emperor's plans of conquest and lofty ideas of his own might, and remained pure amidst general bribery and corruption." He was forced to serve the rebel Yü-wên Hua-chi, and afterwards he helped the ignorant Tou Chien-tê to set up his dynasty of Hsia. Served under T'ang as president of the Board of Revenue and died c. 630. Giles, *Bioes. Dict.*, 1628.

the west was called the Pao-chi t'ai (Terrace of Precious Brush-strokes), and was used for storing famous old pictures. When Yang-ti travelled to Yang-chou (i.e. Chiang-tu in Kiangsu) he took them all with him, but during the journey one of the boats was upset, and more than half the number were lost.

"When Yang-ti perished (was killed) all his pictures came into the possession of Yü-wên Hua-chi,¹ and when Hua-chi went (with these) to Liao-ch'êng (in Shantung) the pictures were all taken by Tou Chien-tê,² while those left behind in the Eastern Capital came into the possession of Wang Shih-ch'ung.³

"When the sacred T'ang dynasty, in the fifth year of Wu-tê (622), had conquered the rebels and

captured the two false pretenders (Tou Chien-tê and Wang Shih-ch'ung), the precious things kept at the two capitals and those taken with the retinue to (Yang-chou) all came into the possession of the House of T'ang. An official, Sung Tsun-kuei, was appointed to bring these by boat along the river westward (to Ch'ang-an). But when he had reached the Whetstone Pillars near the capital, the boat was carried away by the stream and sunk, so that only one or two tenths of the picture (collection) were saved."

There were thus at the beginning of the T'ang period only 300 pictures in the imperial collection, including those from the Sui and the previous dynasties.

II

Chang Sêng-yü and some Contemporaries

THE MOST famous and frequently mentioned painters of the Six Dynasties, placed by Chang Yen-yüan in the "near (or, least) ancient period", are Chang Sêng-yü (active under the Liang), Yang Tzû-hua and Ts'ao Chung-ta (active under the Northern Ch'i dynasty). To these may be added four painters who started in the period of the Six Dynasties but worked mainly under the Sui dynasty, i.e. Tung Po-jên, Chan Tzû-ch'ien, Yang Ch'i-tan and Cheng Fa-shih. Chang Yen-yüan

places them in the "modern" class, but he says that they "equal those of the near ancient period", just as Chang Sêng-yü and Yang Tzû-hua equalled those of the "middle ancient" period, i.e. Ku and Lu, the venerated ancestors of Chinese painting. "But", he adds wisely enough, "if we were to classify them all in detail, several hundred classes would be necessary". He then proceeds to tell about the high prices paid for works of practically all these men, owing to their scarcity and the competition of the collectors.

¹ A favourite of Emperor Yang-ti who finally plotted against his master and caused him to be killed in 618 together with several members of the imperial family. He then set out from Yang-chou for Shensi, taking with him many treasures and women. When he reached the district of Wei (in Chihli) he set himself up as "Emperor of Hsi", but was soon after betrayed by the robber chief Tou Chien-tê, who was covetous of the vast treasures. Giles, *op. cit.*, 2533.

² Tou Chien-tê who thus came into the possession of Hua-chi's treasures, including the pictures which had been in the imperial collection, started as a rebel chief in Shantung; at the time of the death of Yang-ti (618) he proclaimed himself "King of Hua", a title confirmed by the throne on his slaying Yü-wên Hua-chi.

With the aid of P'ei Chiü he organized a regular independent government, extending it over Shantung and parts of Chihli and Honan. Died 621. Giles, *op. cit.*, 1954.

³ Wang Shih-ch'ung was entrusted with the defence of the capital at the time of the fall of the Sui. In 618, fearing the jealousy of the courtiers, he seized the capital and assumed sole control of the government. In the following year he compelled his sovereign to abdicate in his favour, and set up the principality of Chêng. But in 621 he was attacked by Li Shih-min and was slain by one of his officers. Wang Shih-ch'ung may also have been in control at Loyang for a while, where he found a part of Yang-ti's collection, which thus also was lost during the transport to Ch'ang-an. Giles, *op. cit.*, 2222.

No art-lover of the middle or late T'ang period could pretend to possess a representative collection of paintings without some examples by Ku, Lu, Chang Sêng-yu and Wu Tao-tzū. These were, so to speak, the corner-stones for the whole subsequent structure of Chinese painting, and as genuine works by them were extremely rare, hardly any price could be too high to acquire them. But great sums of money were paid even for masters of the "near ancient" class: "One single screen by Tung Po-jên, Chan Tzū-ch'ien, Chêng Fa-shih, Yang Tzū-hua, etc., is worth 20,000 gold (ounces – the price also paid for important works by Yen Li-pên and Wu Tao-tzū) while a slightly inferior specimen will sell for 15,000."¹

To judge by such estimates, the value of old paintings in China was by no means less in the T'ang period than at later times. On the contrary, the art-lovers had reached a point where they realized that a genuine work by one of the old masters could hardly be estimated in money. Painting just as well as specimens of calligraphy and poetry represented to these amateurs values, intangible perhaps, but no less real than those of silks and metal; or as expressed by Chang: "To one who loves paintings they are more precious than gold or jade; but if one does not care for them they are cheaper than tiles or bricks. When the need is for them in a man, how can he talk about prices?"

* * *

The great fame of the above-mentioned painters and of Chang Sêng-yu in particular is nowadays a matter of literary records rather than of still existing examples of their art. No original works by any of them have survived but there are two or three pictures which may be classified as copies after Chang Sêng-yu and consequently should be remembered in our endeavour to characterize the painter.

Chang Sêng-yu's artistic activity was centred in Nanking, the capital of the Liang state, and it spanned over the first half of the sixth century. He

served, to begin with, as secretary to the Prince of Wu-ling and as keeper of the pictures in the Chih-pi pavilion. Later on he was made a General of the Right and Governor of Wu-hsing, probably honorary titles rather than actual charges. Liang Wu-ti employed him repeatedly for the execution of wall-paintings in the newly-erected Buddhist temples in the capital and also for painting portraits of some of the princes, which are said to have been astonishingly life-like.

Among his wall-paintings are mentioned in particular one in T'ien-huang ssū representing Loshana Buddha together with Confucius and his ten disciples, and another in An-lo ssū representing four white dragons. The stories connected with these are worth quoting; they reflect the high esteem and popularity of Chang Sêng-yu's art.²

The combination of the Buddha with Confucius in the first-named picture caused some surprise, as the two teachers had nothing in common, and the emperor asked why the painter had represented the divine sage in a Buddhist temple. To this Sêng-yu answered: "In future times it will become a protection". And so it happened; when later on, under the Northern Chou dynasty, many temples were burned in the persecution of Buddhism, this one was spared, because it contained the image of Confucius.

The dragons painted in An-lo ssū had been left by the painter without eyes; and when some people asked why he did not give them eyes, he answered that if he did, they would fly away. This seemed, however, extravagant talk, and Chang Sêng-yu was asked to prove the truth of it; whereupon he painted the eyes on two of the dragons; "and as he did so, there arose thunder and lightning; the wall broke down, and the two dragons ascended on clouds to heaven. But the two other dragons with no eyes may still be seen at the place."

¹ *Li-tai ming-hua chi*, II, "Discussion of the Value and Classification of Famous Works", Cf. Acker's translation, p. 200-202.

² Cf. *Li-tai ming-hua chi*, VII, *Shu-hua p'u*, vol. 43, *T'u-hui pao-chien*, II, etc.

Somewhat similar stories are also reported about his bird-paintings in Hsing-kuo ssû in Jun-chou. In this temple doves used to roost on a beam just inside the gate, and as they caused serious annoyance by dirtying the visitors, Chang Sêng-yu painted an eagle on the west wall and a hawk on the east wall, both with their heads turned outwards. After that, no more doves ventured into this temple.

The common idea seems to have been that Chang Sêng-yu surpassed all his predecessors in naturalism. His faculty of life-like representation was most remarkable, and in this respect he may have learned something from pictures or painters who came from India or Central Asia. A critic of the Ming period, Yang Shên (1488-1529), wrote about certain wall-paintings by Chang: "When seen from afar, they appeared to the eye as in relief, but when seen near by, they were quite flat",¹ which seems to imply that he used chiaroscuro effects in a way which was not common at the time.

The only critical voice among the commentators of Chang's paintings is Yao Tsui (who was only a few decades younger than the painter). He too praises Chang's naturalistic accuracy, "but", he adds, "the gaze of his Sages and Immortals is wanting in spirit and life . . . How could one expect to find one man perfect in all? He was inferior to his predecessors" (i.e. Ku and Lu) — a verdict which, however, aroused opposition from Chang Yen-yüan as well as from Chang Huai-kuan. The latter gave the strongest expression to his opposition in the following words:²

"Yao Tsui claimed that Chang Sêng-yu, though he came later, was of an inferior class to his predecessors. I cannot agree with these words. Chang's thoughts were like bubbling wells; his talents were gifts of Heaven. With one or two strokes of the brush he accomplished a portrait, making it quite complete. He stands alone among ancient and modern men. As a portrait painter Chang rendered the flesh, Lu the bones, and Ku the spirit."

The last words, often quoted as the most terse

characterization of the three great painters of antiquity, seem to imply that Chang's figures were rather fleshy, while Lu T'an-wei's were more bony and Ku's less material, more spiritualized (metaphorically speaking). This conditional appreciation was sometimes qualified by other remarks regarding Chang Sêng-yu's style and manner of painting. According to Chang Yen-yüan, he "painted with dots and strokes, dashing and sweeping with the brush".³ His brushwork had something of the same impetuous energy as that of the great calligraphist Wang Hsi-chih. "He could render a whole image with one or two strokes", according to Chang Huai-kuan, while the more critical Yao Tsui remarks: "He never dropped the brush whether he was alone or in company; he painted day and night and never got tired".

No less than fifteen scrolls are enumerated under Chang Sêng-yu's name in *Li-tai ming-hua chi*, but they are all lost without a trace. Some of the titles may, however, be recalled as indicative of certain characteristic trends in his art. There are pictures of dragons fighting, and dragons soaring through the clouds; Taoist dignitaries like "Hsing-tao t'ien-wang", and Buddhist saints such as Ting-kuang (Dipaṅkara) and Wei-mo-chih (Vimalakīrti), portraits of Liang Wu-ti and others, but also pictures of a more realistic character, as for instance Han Wu-ti Shooting the Dragon, Liang Officials Shooting Pheasants, Children Dancing at a Farm House, Chanting to the Plum-blossoms, The Drunken Monk, etc. It seems particularly regrettable that not one of these illustrative pictures which formed an important section in Chang's *œuvre* is known through copies or close imitations.

Another series of his works is listed in *Hsüan-ho hua-p'u*, the catalogue of the emperor Hui Tsung's collection. The majority represent Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, the Sixteen Lohans, The Ten Great

¹ Quoted in *Shu-hua p'u*, vol. 12, A.8r.

² Quoted in the biographical records about Chang Sêng-yu in *Li-tai ming-hua chi*, Sect. VII.

³ *Li-tai ming-hua chi*, II, Chapt. 3.

Monks, Mañjuśrī, The Heavenly Goddess, The Brushing of the Elephant, etc., but there are also representations of Taoist subjects such as The Heavenly Kings, The Nine Brightnesses (i.e. The Sun, the Moon and the Seven Planets), and The Five Planets and Twenty-eight Constellations. This last picture and The Brushing of the Elephant are the only two which may be recognized in still existing later renderings of the same subjects.

The Buddhist picture (inspired by a Jātaka story) shows two men occupied in washing and scrubbing a large white elephant, while a noble personage and two or three hermits are standing by as onlookers, a motif which enjoyed much popularity in China during the Yüan and Ming periods. It was rendered by some well-known artists, such as Ch'ien Hsüan and Ch'ên Hung-shou, who have represented it in somewhat varied and simplified compositions. An earlier version of the same motif is known through a badly worn picture in the Freer Gallery (and a later copy in Japan).¹ It is hardly possible to do justice to the picture in its present state, but it seems to have retained the imprint of an early design. The drawing of the men in their strange attires reveals a definite style which corresponds better to the little we know of masters of pre-T'ang date than to the characteristics of later painters. But Chinese critics have ascribed the picture to Yen Li-pên, the great master at the beginning of the T'ang period. If there is some reason for this attribution which escapes our ken, it might be explained by the fact that Yen Li-pên followed in the footsteps of Chang Sêng-yu.

The connexion between these two masters has been pointed out by several critics of later times, perhaps most definitely by Tung Yo and Kuo Jo-hsü, who both refer to Yen Li-pên's observations on a picture by Chang Sêng-yu representing A Meeting on the Wei Bridge (*Wei-ch'iao t'u*).² When Yen Li-pên saw this picture at Cheng-chou in Hupei it did not, to begin with, make much impression on him; his first remark was: "The painter is simply a great name". The following day when he came back to look at the picture, he said: "He was a good hand

among his contemporaries"; but then, when he had returned a second time and looked at the picture once more, he said: "The fame of the master is certainly not an empty pretence" . . . "He could not go away for ten days, and even when sleeping he lay right in front of it. He examined every stroke in it."

The other picture listed in *Hsüan-ho hua-p'u*, to which reference was made above, represented The Five Planets and Twenty-eight Constellations. One portion of this, comprising the images of Five Planets and Twelve Constellations, is generally identified with a picture in the Abe collection (now in the Museum in Osaka), and as this picture shows no marks of being cut or shortened, it is generally assumed that the original, which represented the complete series of planets and constellations, was divided into two scrolls, one of which seems lost. But these must have existed in Japan at the end of the eighteenth century, because at that time the well-known Japanese painter Buncho made a copy of the whole thing, including its planets and constellations.³

It is, however, surprising to find that the portion of the picture here under discussion has given cause to widely diverging attributions. In the colophons attached to the picture – one signed Tung Ch'ich'ang, the other Ch'ên Chi-ju – it is attributed to Wu Tao-tzū and Yen Li-pên respectively, while Chang Ch'ou, a contemporary and no less prominent authority on painting, describes it in his well-known chronicle *Ch'ing-ho shu-hua fang*, vol. III, p. 7, as a work by Chang Sêng-yu. He praises in particular the very fine brush-work and the deep colouring and expresses the opinion that the picture should be placed in a higher class than the works of Yen Li-pên and Wu Tao-tzū. He furthermore emphasizes the importance of the inscriptions in seal characters between the figures, which also had aroused the admiration of Chao Mêng-fu.

¹ Repr. in *Tsao*, p. 137.

² Cf. *Kuang-ch'uan hua-po*, Notes about Yen Li-pên's "Wei-ch'iao t'u"; Kuo Jo-hsü, *T'u-hua chien wen shih*, V, 1, 3.

³ Reproduced in Yukio Yashiro's article on the picture in *Bijutsu Kenkyū*, 1949, No. 139.

Chang Ch'ou's attribution and commendation of the picture are repeated with slight variations by some contemporary or later writers such as Pien Yung-yü in *Shu-hua hui-k'ao* (c.1683), but there are other well-known critics of the same periods who support the opinion shortly expressed three hundred years earlier (1365) by Hsia Wên-yen in *T'u-hui pao-chien*, vol.V (additional chapter), who mentions this picture under the name of Liang Ling-tsan with the following words: "In the Sung *mi-ko* (Secret Pavilion of the Sung Dynasty) was a scroll representing the Five Planets and the Twenty-eight Constellations (i.e. by Liang Ling-tsan), and Li Po-shih (Kung-lin) said that it was much like Wu Tao-tzû's work" – (an opinion which, however, did not meet the approval of the later critics).

The attribution of the picture to Liang Ling-tsan was accepted by several well-known connoisseurs of the Ming and Ch'ing periods, as for instance Ho Liang-chün and Li Jih-hua (1565-1635). The former mentions the picture in *Shu-hua ming hsin lu* as a work by Liang Ling-tsan and tells that he had seen a copy of it in the home of a friend, whereas the original then was in the imperial collection. Li Jih-hua, on the other hand, writes in his *Notes on Painting*: "I saw in the home of Hsiang Mêng-huang the picture of the Five Planets and the Twenty-eight Constellations by Liang Ling-tsan". How these two remarks should be combined is a problem that hardly needs to occupy us here; they are only quoted as evidences of the prevailing attribution of this picture at the end of the Ming period. The most explicit statement about it is, however, to be found in the additional (last) chapter to *Mo-yüan hui-kuan* (c.1742), where An I-chou inserted the following note about the Five Planets and Twenty-eight Constellations:

"According to tradition, there were two scrolls, and both lacked the last portion. One of them had a *t'i pa* by Chao Mêng-fu, and this scroll had also the square seal with the double dragon beside other seals of the Hsüan-ho and Chêng-ho epochs . . . The first portion of the picture represents the images of

the Five Planets, the latter portion the Divinities of the Constellations from Virgo to Aquarius, twelve in all. After these there is still some silk and on this a large seal of the Hsüan-ho epoch. Judging by this, the end-portion has not been cut off. But as the scroll (as a whole) would have been too large for rolling and unrolling, it was painted in two parts, of which this is one. The picture has a title written in *li shu* by Liang Ling-tsan, and the name of each Divinity written in *chuan shu*. The script is very archaic.

"On two sheets attached to the picture are *t'i pa* by Tung Ch'ü-ch'ang and Ch'ên Chi-ju, one of them mentions Wu Tao-tzû, the other Yen Li-pên (as painter of the picture). It is most like a copy by a man of the T'ang era or, if not, the work of Liang Ling-tsan."

An I-chou's way of phrasing his notes about this much discussed picture is rather cautious, but it could hardly be interpreted as a support for the attribution of the picture to Chang Sêng-yü. It is true that he mentions it under the name of this master, but he describes it definitely as a copy executed by a man of the T'ang period, if not by Liang Ling-tsan (which is practically the same thing), and no later critic has to my knowledge advanced a better balanced explanation about the age and origin of this picture.

Liang Ling-tsan, who wrote the inscriptions in *li shu* and *chuan shu* on this scroll and who also is mentioned by some of the old critics as the painter of the figures, served as a military official in the K'ai-yüan era (713-741) and became best known as a mathematician and an astronomer, but he is also said to have done some paintings in the manner of Wu Tao-tzû.

The first portion of the present scroll contains the images of the *Cosmocratores*, or spiritual rulers of the Five Sacred Planets. They are partly represented in the shape of symbolic animals and provided with significant attributes. The first one called *Sui hsing*, the Year Star, or Jupiter, has the shape of a man with a monkey's head seated on a swiftly running animal with a stag-like body and a boar's head. The speed of

the running beast is reflected not only in the movement of the slender legs but also in the long bristles of the boar's head.

The second is called *Ying-hua hsing*, the Shimmering and Deluding Star, i.e. Mars, and has the shape of a muscular man with two pairs of extra arms and a donkey's head, who is seated on a mule walking at a slow pace. The six hands of this fantastic being are holding various weapons such as a sword, a lance, a mace, a dagger, an axe, and a wheel club, making him well prepared for warlike occupations; in spite of the donkey's head, he is indeed no Shakesperean Bottom!

The third, called *Chên hsing*, the star known as Warding off Evil Influences, i.e. Saturn, is represented by a foreign-looking, bearded man seated cross-legged on a large bull. He is draped in a scarf that leaves most of the hairy body bare and looks like an Indian Arhat, particularly as he is lifting the right hand in a gesture corresponding to *varada mudra* (absence of fear) in Buddhist art.

The fourth is the *T'ai-pai hsing*, the Great White Star, or Venus, represented as a beautiful maiden riding on a large bird (phoenix?) soaring through space. The long wavy lines of the bird's tail and wings flutter like streamers, and also the long sleeve of the maiden, but she sits upright, crowned with another bird's head, proud like a queen of the air.

The fifth is *Ch'en hsing*, the Early or Lucky Star, i.e. Mercury, represented as a beautiful young man in a long trailing garment and an animal's head cap. He is the recorder, holding a writing brush in his right hand and a tablet on his left arm. The dignity and refinement of the figure are emphasized in the richly flowing folds of the ample garment.

The twelve zodiacal constellations which fill the rest of the scroll are also represented by single figures of a symbolical nature, though perhaps less comprehensible and therefore not so attractive from the westerner's point of view. Only one or two may here be mentioned as examples of the whole row and of the stylistic refinement characteristic of the best among them.

Most remarkable in this respect is the so-called *Fêng hsing* (Wind-star) represented as a youthful bare-headed man in a long garment with wide sleeves, seated on an elegantly caparisoned horse walking through flames which reach to its knees. The rider is holding the reins with his left hand and carries a large bow and two long arrows in the right; his attention seems to be fixed on the guiding of his horse.

The drawing, which is reduced to the contours and a few interior lines indicating the folds of the garment and the main muscles of the horse, is remarkable for its incisiveness. Every detail is perfectly rendered, in a strict *kung pi* fashion, but one looks in vain for the traces of a great master's brush in these evenly flowing lines.

The same kind of draughtsmanship may be observed in the other constellation pictures, though they are simpler, most of them consisting of a single standing figure. As an example may be mentioned *Tou hsing*, the Dipper in the Great Bear, which is represented by a man wearing a panther skin around his loins and carrying in one hand a rope and in the other a fascis of thin rods and a purse, while the head is surrounded with a flaming nimbus. Very characteristic of this, as of most of the other constellation personages, is the full round face with small but expressive eyes, a curved nose and very small mouth. It may be said with some justification that the facial type just as well as the rest of the figure is fleshy rather than bony, which corresponds to the traditional characterization of Chang Sêng-yu's style, also expressed in the following remarks by Mi Fei in *Hua shih*: "Chang Sêng-yu painted devas and court-ladies with round and florid faces, but nevertheless of profound quietude with the appearance of celestial beings".

The picture evidently contains characteristic examples of Chang Sêng-yu's types and figure drawing, even though they can hardly be said to possess the individual character and expressiveness that we would expect in original works of the sixth century. The refinement is perhaps somewhat

over-emphasized, suggesting the hand of a skilful copyist rather than the brush of a creative master. And as the composition corresponds to the descriptions of Chang Sêng-yu's picture, we are led to the conclusion that it is a copy after an important work by this old master.

The landscape paintings traditionally ascribed to Chang Sêng-yu or marked as copies or imitations after his designs are perhaps more interesting as evidences of the high esteem in which he was held by later generations of painters than as examples of his individual genius. Yet they represent a definite type of landscape and merit as such to be remembered, even though none of them was executed before the Ming period.

They may, in a general way, be characterized as decorative colour compositions, somewhat flat and structureless, painted in the *mo ku* manner, and as such reminding one of wall-paintings rather than of the kind of landscapes which became prevalent in the eighth and ninth centuries. The designs are relatively simple, consisting of wooded or snow-covered hills, clumps of large trees, circling clouds and quiet inlets of water below, but these elements are effectively coloured with tints borrowed from autumn woods or spring verdure. This endows the best among them with a certain distinction, even though the brush-work is relatively coarse and their artistic significance superficial. The traditional attributions may indeed in some instances be open to discussion, but there are also examples definitely marked as imitations after Chang Sêng-yu, such as the landscapes reproduced in *Ku-kung shu-hua chi*, vol.24 and *Nanju Meiguen*, vol.17.

The essential point in cases like this is not the problem regarding the execution of the pictures but the stylistic pattern or type that they represent, and there can be little doubt that Chang Sêng-yu's influence in this respect was important. In other words, a certain school or manner of landscape painting grew up around him and was continued by his followers during more than a generation. Their works have been copied by later men just as often as

the master's compositions and have thus served to transmit certain general principles. Here may be mentioned in particular the painter Yang Shêng (active in the first half of the eighth century) who became famous for his landscapes executed in the *mo-ku* manner. His name is attached to several paintings in private and public collections which illustrate the Chang Sêng-yu tradition.

* * *

Chang Sêng-yu was by no means the only painter of importance at the Liang court, but the records about the others are scantier and their names have seldom been attached to existing pictures. The major part of the pictorial output in Nanking at the time consisted probably of wall-paintings in the newly-erected temples, an artistic activity which followed in the wake of the growing religious interest stimulated by the communications with India. Very little is known about these in detail, but it seems that Buddhistic art in Nanking and the South was more closely related to Indian prototypes than the religious art which in the same epoch was displayed in the cave temples and sanctuaries of the northern provinces, then under the sway of the Toba Tartars, or the Northern Wei dynasty. But whereas the artistic activity of the northerners is more or less known through existing paintings and sculptures, the Buddhist monuments in (or from) the South are very rare. Nanking was, however, at the time one of the main centres of cultural and religious influence in the Far East, and it was from there that Korea at the time obtained Buddhist scriptures and probably also models of religious art.¹ Through this intermediary a strain of Indian influence may have been transmitted to Japan also, as may be observed in some early Japanese specimens of religious art.

In Chang Yen-yüan's classification of painters of the Six Dynasties and the Sui Dynasty to which

¹ In 535 Korea asked for and obtained from China (Nanking) a present of "Commentaries on various sūtras, particularly that of the Great Decease, the Book of Odes, doctors, painters and professors". This historical note is communicated verbatim by A. Waley in *An Introduction to the Study of Chinese Painting*, p.83.

reference was made above, the name of Chang Sêng-yu was coupled with that of Yang Tzū-hua; these two painters of the "nearest ancient" period were said to equal their predecessors of the "middle ancient" period. The historical information about Yang Tzū-hua is, however, very scanty and no existing picture has, to our knowledge, been honoured with his name. He painted, according to tradition, dragons soaring through clouds and mist more or less in the same way as Chang Sêng-yu, but was more famous for his pictures of horses and riders, some of which became subjects of popular stories in which the intense vitality of the animals was the point of wonder. We are told that one of the horses which he had painted on a wall was heard scratching and whining in the night, as if calling for food. Yen Li-pên, the leading master at the beginning of the T'ang period, expressed great admiration for Yang Tzū-hua and said that "nothing could be added and nothing could be taken away from his works"; he found them perfect. Painting of horses and other animals had evidently reached a high standard at the time.

Among the somewhat younger painters who continued their activity through the Sui period Chêng Fa-shih – active in Ch'ang-an under the Northern Chou and the Sui dynasty – is often mentioned with much praise. He has been called "the link between Chang Sêng-yu and Yen Li-pên". Chang Yen-yüan transmits records according to which the painter was a close observer of nature and capable of rendering even the finest decorative details (such as silk tassels) exactly and elegantly. He painted "the gatherings of pleasure crowds and court-scenes, high temples and terraced buildings amidst beautiful trees, blue ponds, foaming streams surrounded by flowers and sweet smelling grass", i.e. princely gardens in which the enchanting atmosphere sometimes was enhanced by "the moon behind the clouds on spring nights". It sounds indeed as if Chêng Fa-shih's garden-scenes had been early forerunners to Ch'iu Ying's popular renderings of similar motifs.

Tung Po-jên and Chan Tzū-ch'ien were both prominent members of the set of painters who came to Ch'ang-an towards the end of the Northern Chou dynasty (557–581) and continued their activity here during the reign of the first Sui emperor (581–604). They are often mentioned together as a kind of rivals or competitors in imperial favour as well as in their artistic activities. They are both praised as highly gifted independent masters who did not follow the beaten track of their predecessors, but learned more from their own observations of nature. They painted mostly scenes from actual life, men and horses, farmsteads and hunting parties, terraces and pavilions, beside Buddhist subjects, but no actual landscapes, because the country around the capital was flat and open and did not inspire landscape paintings. The expressiveness or life-breath of their pictures was extraordinary and went far beyond the skill of ordinary men. In Tung's paintings the horses and carriages seemed to move and every detail was rendered with the utmost exactness. And Chan was not his inferior as a horse painter, "though his pictures of terraces and pavilions were less successful than Tung's". Tung became known under the significant nickname Chih-hai, The Sea of Wisdom, whereas Chan in later times was called the originator of T'ang painting.

These encomiums, transmitted by Chang Yen-yüan from earlier sources, may serve to give a general notion about the kind of painting that was cultivated by the two great masters at the court of Sui Wên-ti, but they do not offer a clue to their individual styles or manners of painting which would make it possible to decide whether the traditional attributions of certain pictures to them are based on good reason or not. At least two of these pictures are sufficiently interesting to merit attention at this place, even though executed at later periods.

The picture ascribed to Chan Tzū-ch'ien is a horizontal composition, a short but broad handscroll which was on exhibition in 1954 in Hui-hua

kuan of the Peking Palace. It represents a River View in Spring; the fruit trees are in blossom on the rocky shores and a number of small figures in white garments are strolling about, riding along the river banks, or being transported across the water in a boat. White clouds and blue mountains add some luminous touches to the fresh spring atmosphere; it was evidently once a very attractive picture, but it is now in a deplorable state. The inscription with the attribution to Chan Tzū-ch'ien is in the handwriting of the emperor Hui-tsung, whose opinion may be said to carry some historical weight, though unsupported by any stylistic arguments. Were it not for this somewhat surprising attribution, the picture might be classified as a work in the manner of the famous T'ang landscapist Li Ssū-hsün. It is here reproduced on Pls. 79, 80 among the pictures of the T'ang period, because we know no other landscape that better than this corresponds to the descriptions of Li Ssū-hsün's paintings.

The specimen of Tung Po-jên's art forms part of the former Palace Museum collection and is reproduced in *Ku-kung chou-k'an*, vol. 14. I have not seen the original, and the reproduction is far from sufficient for a stylistic analysis, but it conveys the impression of a kind of illustrative painting in which the figures are more important than the landscape. The motif is borrowed from the popular records about Chu-ko Liang and Liu Pei, the title *San ku ts'ao-lu* referring to Liu Pei's third visit to Chu-ko Liang's grass hut in the mountains (when he finally succeeded in engaging Chu-ko as his adviser). Three men are seen arriving on horseback and two

on foot before the bamboo gate which has been opened by a woman, while Chu-ko Liang sits in the pavilion beyond in splendid solitude, leaning against a table. The whole presentation has an imprint of realism; it is very neat in every detail, yet at the same time suggestive of an atmosphere of seclusion and expectation in a lonely mountain abode.

The attribution to Tung Po-jên is expressed in a colophon at the top of the picture, dated 1354 and signed by the Yüan painter Sa Tu-la. He starts by telling about some Buddhist and Taoist pictures by Tung Po-jên which he had seen in certain places and turns then to the present picture (in the house of a friend), in which he recognizes the same artistic character. His opinion is thus based on actual observations, but when his friend asks him for some reasons, he simply answers that the matter is to him self-evident; the old master stands out as clearly as "a crane in a flock of chickens", whereupon the friend bowed and thanked him for the enlightenment.

We would not be inclined to do the same, because the picture looks like a Yüan version of an earlier design. Sa Tu-la may have had some justification for his opinion which is no longer available.

Each of the above-mentioned painters and two or three more whom Chang Yen-yüan places in the same group, became famous for some special kind of subjects, such as court-scenes and festivals, carriages and horses, pavilions and terraces, spirits and devils, etc., "but", adds the historian, "when I say that they excelled in one thing, it does not mean that they could not master other subjects with equal skill".

III

Tomb-paintings and Stone-engravings

THE ALMOST complete destruction of the scroll-paintings by the leading masters of pre-T'ang date makes it impossible for us to obtain a comprehensive idea about the achievements of the famous painters

of the fifth and sixth centuries; they remain to us literary shadows rather than concrete artistic personalities. But owing to the discovery of wall-paintings in tombs of this period in border districts of

China and of engraved stone slabs with pictorial designs, which formed parts of sarcophagi or tomb-chambers in Central China, it is still possible to acquire a general notion of certain kinds of illustrative painting which enjoyed popularity at the time. These materials may well be unequal and insufficient for a general historical study, yet they are authentic remains of an otherwise little-known art, and merit as such to be noted in a survey of the development of Chinese painting.

The painted tombs are, as said above, not situated in China proper but in south-eastern Manchuria and northern Korea, *i.e.* within the borders of the former Kao-kou-li kingdom, and their paintings may thus represent a somewhat provincial or belated form of art, more dependent on the stylistic traditions surviving from the Han period than the works by the leading artists of the time. We know these tomb-paintings mainly through the excellent Japanese publications in which they are reproduced, partly in colour, and thus more clearly visible than in the dimly lighted tomb-chambers.¹ Yet it must be admitted that mechanical reproductions can never render the subdued light, the atmosphere and associations of the stone-lined subterranean rooms so essential for the artistic effect of these places. From my visits in former years to some of the Korean tombs I retain more significant impressions than can be obtained from the most perfect reproductions.

The tombs which have been excavated in the neighbourhood of T'ung-kou, on the Yalu river, where the first capital of the Kao-kou-li kingdom was situated, stretch over a period of more than a century and represent two different types. The earlier ones, which are constructed exclusively of stone in the form of truncated pyramids, are mostly from the first half of the sixth century. They have no painted decorations; such have been found only in the rooms of somewhat later tombs which are covered by earthen mounds or hillocks. These painted tombs seem to have been erected at various times during the latter part of the fifth and the beginning of the sixth century after the capital of

the kingdom had been removed from T'ung-kou to P'ing-yang on the Daido-ko in northern Korea. The artistic activity continued there until the beginning of the seventh century. The Korean tomb paintings represent the last stage within this particular group of pictorial monuments, which as a whole corresponds in date to the latter part of the Six Dynasties and the Sui Dynasty in China, thus representing a special aspect of a style known to us through numerous sculptures but no original paintings from China proper.

The interiors of most of the decorated mounded tombs consist of a square room ($c.3 \times 3\frac{1}{2}$ m.) lined with carefully fitted stone blocks, and in front of this a smaller ante-room, but there are also some double or triple room tombs. As the main room is covered by a corbelled dome, the profile of the cross-section looks like a beehive, though the plan is square. The pictures on the walls and on the successive corbels of the dome are usually applied on a white slip or plaster coating, but in some of the later examples this is omitted and the paintings are executed directly on the surface of the well-trimmed stone blocks, a method which has resulted in a very intimate association of the pigments with the stone; the tigers and dragons as well as some of the figures seem to live and move in a mysterious atmosphere evaporating from walls which have absorbed the moisture or breath of centuries.

The motifs of these paintings may be divided into three different groups; the first consists of scenes from the life of the defunct, sometimes including portraits of the master and his family; the second of symbolic subjects such as the animals of the four

¹ *Chōsen Kōseki Zūfu*, vol. II, published by the Government General of Chōsen (c. 1920) contains reproductions of the most important tombs in Korea. These have been repeated in several other publications such as the album called *Mural Paintings in the Old Tombs of the Kōkuryō Period*. The tombs along the Yalu river in Manchuria are reproduced in *T'ung Kou*, vol. I, II. The second volume contains "Kao-ko-lian Wall Paintings", by H. Ikeuchi and S. Umehara, Tokyo, 1940. There is some additional material in Umehara's article "Newly discovered Tombs with Wall Paintings of the Kao-ko-li dynasty" in *Archives of the China Art Society of America*, 1952.

quarters of the world, *i.e.* the dragon, the tiger, the tortoise, and the bird; and the third of decorative patterns, scrolls, birds and more or less conventionalized animals, to which also may be added certain architectural elements, such as pillars, capitals, and brackets, by which the interiors are given the appearance of wooden structures. (*Cf.* Pls. 18, 19.)

The best preserved illustrative scenes may be seen in two of the mounded tombs in the T'ung-kou region, known as The Tomb of the Dancing Figures and The Tomb of the Wrestling Scene. The names refer to the motifs represented on the side walls of these tomb chambers, whereas the central wall in each tomb, facing the entrance, is occupied by an illustration from the life of the master of the tomb: in the first-named instance he is shown at a festival meal in the company of two men (apparently Taoists); and in the second tomb as *paterfamilias* in the company of his wives and children.

The mode of composition is practically the same in the two instances (and also repeated elsewhere). The figures are placed on a raised stage or platform which is enclosed and partly shaded by a tent-like drapery fastened to the feigned beams and brackets. The scenes have an air of solemnity, not to say stiffness; the figures are seated on stools or cushions, which also serve to suggest a horizontal extension or the depth-dimension of the room.

There is plenty of empty space between them, but their movements are all along the vertical plane and give them some likeness to silhouettes or shadows gliding over the wall. To what extent this silhouetting is intentional or the result of a relative primitiveness, may be a question of interpretation, but it is evident that it corresponds to the requirements of a unified mural decoration. With regard to this mode of stylizing one cannot but recall some of the paintings in the Etruscan tombs of the fifth century B.C., for instance at Tarquinia, which may be said to illustrate a similar stage in the development of mural painting. The differences between the Etruscan and the Korean paintings are indeed more obvious than the correspondences, yet the latter, which refer

mainly to the transmission of movement and realistic character in structural designs, should not be overlooked in an effort to appreciate the decorations in the old Kao-kou-li tombs.

A detailed description of these paintings would carry us too far, because they are rather varied and contain a fair amount of somewhat heterogeneous illustrative details. The paintings on one of the side-walls of the Tomb of the Dancing Figures may be cited as an example. One half of the composition consists of two small sheds or open houses from which two girls are proceeding with dishes of food towards the festival meal represented on the adjoining (central) wall; whereas the other half of the same side-wall is occupied by the trail of the dancers who are moving on in slow tempo led by a man with a feathered cap. Another group of figures, probably a chorus of singers, is placed on a lower level, while the musicians who were placed above are almost obliterated. The buildings and the man on horseback who confronts the singers suggest a horizontal dimension, while the dancers who hold the most prominent place in the composition move along as silhouettes on the wall quite detached from any kind of room or spatial limitation. Yet they are convincingly real, not to say fascinating; marking the slow rhythm of the music by swinging their arms and long sleeves in unison in time with it. This portion is indeed a little masterpiece of mural decoration, but it has no structural connexion with the other half of the wall-painting with the house (Pl. 18).

In the picture on the opposite wall hunters on horseback are chasing stags and a tiger in flying gallop between scattered hillocks. They are the only elements of landscape actually painted, but they suffice to produce an impression of a desolate plain over which the hunters are racing with dizzying speed. A large tree is introduced as a sort of limiting wing, and on the other side of it a bullock-cart stands waiting, ready to carry home the hunter's booty. It may be noticed in particular that the fittings, the weapons and costumes of the riders correspond to the outfit on some of the Chinese

tomb-figurines of the Northern Wei period, a correspondence also evident in the narrow-headed horses with excessively slender legs (Pl.20).

Beside these large paintings there are minor decorative pictures in the upper sections of the walls and in the corbels of the dome which should not be overlooked. The stylizing of the large flowers, the soaring birds and the leaping animals is carried out with an unfailing sense for decorative structure, and this is still more true of some of the human figures painted on narrow corbel strips. We notice in particular the very thin and supple musicians seated on the ground, who are plucking the strings of the *ch'in* with their long and searching fingers. No less remarkable are the figures which leap or soar through space among cloudlets, seemingly as swift as gusts of wind. Their slenderness is snake-like, their attenuated legs stretching out from split trousers. The limbs and the whole body seem to reverberate to the sound from the long curving tube which the musician is blowing. The execution is light and swift, it bears witness to a mastership of the brush and a tradition of style which was developed in China already at the end of the Han period, and evidently lived on for two or three centuries in somewhat attenuated versions in the border lands.

Among the painted tombs in Korea proper are also some in which the illustrative scenes from the life of the defunct hold an important place; this may be seen at Baisanri (Waisanli), where such scenes are combined with the animals of the four directions, and in the somewhat later and larger tombs at Shinchido (Chinjidong), but in none of these are the ancestral genre-pictures comparable in quality to the paintings in the Tomb of the Dancers at T'ung-kou. We may consequently leave them, turning instead to the so-called Kosai tombs at Sambori (Sammyoli), which are decorated exclusively with pictures of the three animals and the bird ruling over the four quarters of the world. These tombs are generally considered to be among the latest in the whole series, probably erected only at the very end of the sixth century. They are constructed with great care,

the corbels are beautifully jointed and the granite blocks so well trimmed that no slip of plaster was necessary as a ground for the paintings.

On each wall is a large animal; the Green Dragon on the east, the White Tiger on the west, the Black Tortoise, encircled by a snake, on the north and the Red Bird (doubled) at both sides of the entrance on the south wall. Above these animals are borders of honeysuckle or similar tendrils, and on the broad slabs which serve as corbels for the dome are painted soaring apsaras, lotus flowers and birds, the influence from Buddhist iconography being clearly traceable. And the quadrangular slab which forms the top of the ceiling is decorated with a coiling dragon, the motif which, in spite of its non-religious origin, is so common as a crowning feature on the Buddhist stelae of this period.

The decorative beauty and energy of these large animals (measuring over two metres) indicate consummate draughtsmanship. It makes little or no difference whether they are called dragons or tigers; they have all the same long, slim bodies on elastic spring-like legs, with wings on their shoulders, the same thin necks curving in S-like fashion and supporting large, horned heads. They are akin to those proud chimaeras and winged lions which stand at the tombs of the Liang princes at Tan-yang and Nanking. They are off-shoots of the same fantastic race, but instead of being bulky and static like the stone animals, they are light and fugitive, as if they were soaring across the walls, disappearing in the dim light of the tomb. This impression of fugitive vision, a movement which is almost freed from material bonds, is no doubt heightened by the veil of age and dust, which softens the colours and fuses the forms with the grey stone slabs on which they are painted. There is still enough of the white, the bluish green, the black and the vermillion to emphasize the decorative beauty, but as the colours have become subdued, the energy of the lines stand out more dominantly, the forms become almost transparent, dissolved into sheer movement.

When provincial painters on the borders of China

were able to produce such magnificent dragons and tigers, we may imagine that similar motifs treated by the leading masters must indeed have been great works of art. No wonder that the dragon paintings by Chang Sêng-yü gave rise to stories about their supernatural fierceness and faculty of moving at will. However fantastic, they have some interest as indications of the general tendency to emphasize a linear mode or style by which even fleeting impressions of movement and form could be transmitted. We know this to some extent from the best sculptures of the Northern Wei period, but here it is confined to the style of the garments on static figures and seldom finds such free and spontaneous expression as in these great wall-paintings.

* * *

The tomb decorations of this period in or from China proper which as yet have come to light are, as said above, not original paintings but engravings and flat reliefs executed on the walls of the sacrificial halls and on sarcophagi, possibly after the patterns of wall-paintings. Owing to the manner of execution, they are more or less akin to line drawings, though it is at the same time evident that the transposition of the drawing to the polished stone blocks involved a considerable loss of spontaneity and suppleness, particularly when this work was entrusted to artisans of unequal skill. The tradition of using such carved or engraved stone blocks for the decoration of the sacrificial halls at the tombs (and sometimes also for sarcophagi) survived from the Han period; there must have been a great number of similar engravings made in China during the intervening three or four centuries, though only a few examples have come to light. The main purpose of these decorations was still to entertain the spirit of the departed and to inculcate moral virtues. The traditional motifs illustrating Confucian stories of filial piety are still repeated, in spite of the fact that Buddhism was at this time – i.e. the beginning of the sixth century – firmly established all over the country and a main source of inspiration for painters and

sculptors. But this did not prevent the common Chinese from sticking to the Confucian precepts as the safest guide beyond the tomb as well as in daily life.

To what extent these stone reliefs and engravings actually reproduce contemporary pictures is a matter of conjecture. No such paintings have survived, but it seems quite probable that there were also tomb shrines and sacrificial halls built of clay and wood and decorated with paintings, as well as coffins or sarcophagi of wood, sometimes lacquered or decorated with paintings. But no such pictures are mentioned among the recorded works of the leading masters.

The principal examples known at present are two sarcophagi in the museums at Minneapolis and Kansas City, dated respectively 524 and c. 525, and a small stone house, or quasi-miniature *tz'ü tang*, in the Boston Museum, which is dated 529. These monuments have all inscriptions referring to the Northern Wei dynasty, and they come from the same part of Northern China where most of the contemporary religious sculpture was produced.

The decorations on the Stone House in Boston consist exclusively of engravings executed on both sides of the limestone blocks which form its walls.¹ The middle section of the façade is open, but the two end pieces (at the corners) are occupied by guardians in full armour of the same type as we know from many of the clay statuettes of the Northern Wei dynasty representing tomb guardians in miniature. The background, visible above the heads of the figures, is filled with strips of mountains and clouds, but in addition to this one may notice, at least on one of the panels, a conventionalized lotus flower indicating some influence from Buddhist art. The guardians fulfil apparently the same purpose as the Dvarapalas on the religious monuments.

¹ The building is 1.38 m. high, 2 m. wide and 0.97 m. deep. For a full description of the construction and the decoration, see Mr. Kojitō Tomita's article in *Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston*, December 1942. In this article may also be read a translation of the important mortuary inscription on a tablet still in China.

No such connexion with Buddhist art is traceable in the illustrative pictures. Those on the exterior of the side walls represent Confucian paragons of filial piety, while the back wall (outside) is occupied by some portrait-like figures, and the pictures in the interior illustrate preparations for a sacrificial meal and processions of important people arriving at the feast, these last motifs being closely akin to what we know from the Han reliefs. To relate the stories of the pictures in detail is hardly necessary; the titles or general indications about the motifs are given in Chinese characters and the contents are explained in Mr. Tomita's article referred to above.

If these engraved slabs are compared with works of the same kind executed in the Han period, it may easily be observed that they are considerably advanced, particularly in regard to unified space composition, but also in their plastically further developed figure-drawing. The over-crowding of the compositions, which detracts more than it adds to the artistic expressiveness, has probably been caused by the borrowing of elements from disparate sources, Buddhist as well as Confucian (PL.22).

The back wall, which measures almost two metres, has no illustrative scenes, but simply three detached groups, each consisting of a somewhat voluminous gentleman accompanied or supported by a youthful servant. The men are all wearing wide trailing garments with long sleeves, broad belts and high caps with tassels, two of them seem to be moving slowly towards each other, the third is looking backward – turning vehemently at the waist – and all these movements are emphasized by the fluttering garments. The figures are drawn with greater freedom than the illustrative scenes mentioned above, a difference which becomes still more evident on a closer examination of the portrait-like faces. They appear more modern than the figures in the illustrative scenes, reminding us more of drawings or paintings of the T'ang period than of any earlier figures, be they plastic or pictorial. Is it really possible that figures of this type were executed at the

beginning of the sixth century? The question must here be left open (PL.23).

The illustrative scenes in the interior of the house have all some reference to the sacrificial feast and meal. Stylistically they are of the same kind as the scenes on the outside and may be passed over here, as we have no space for illustrations of them.

* * *

The two sarcophagi previously mentioned are both decorated with illustrations to popular stories of filial piety, but apart from this correspondence with regard to the motifs and the general shape of the coffins, they have little in common. They seem to be products of quite different centres of artistic activity, though contemporary. The sarcophagus in the Minneapolis Museum has a more sculptural character; its decorative motifs, which are borrowed from various sources, are thus relatively isolated as single units with only slight compositional connexion.

According to the eulogy beautifully inscribed on a memorial tablet, this sarcophagus was made for Prince Mien of Chao, a nephew of the reigning emperor who bestowed upon him at his death (523) the posthumous name Chên Ching ("Fitting Example").¹ He was buried at the foot of the Pei-mang mountains, in the neighbourhood of old Loyang, where so many prominent men of various dynasties have been buried. The square block which served as a cover on the memorial tablet is decorated with two exceedingly lithe wreathing dragons whirling around a central knob amidst a shower of flame-like cloudlets borne like big snowflakes on a storm wind. In addition to these there are two large birds and a sort of magnificent double-spiral pattern in the borders on the bevelled edges of this cover.

The sarcophagus in the Nelson Gallery in Kansas City is a product of maturer art and more accomplished technical skill than the two monuments

¹ Historical information about this monument is found in an article in *The Bulletin of the Minneapolis Institute of Arts*, June 1948.

mentioned above, in spite of the fact that it was executed about the same period. The date attached to it in the museum is c.525, four years before the Boston house and only a year after the sarcophagus in Minneapolis.¹

The motifs of the engravings which cover the two main sides of this sarcophagus are all illustrations to Confucian paragons of filial piety, they contain no elements borrowed from Taoist or Buddhist sources. The scenes are thus essentially profane (though with a moral purpose), which adds something to their attractiveness. Compositionally they may be compared to horizontal scrolls, not only because they stretch over a lengthy space, but also because the prevailing impression is, even at a hasty glance, one of continuity or, in other words, the successive figure-groups seem to follow each other naturally in a continuous landscape. This similarity to horizontal scroll-paintings becomes of course most evident when the engravings are seen in rubbings, which also far better than any photographs reveal their wealth of naturalistic detail and pictorial character. The distance from engravings like these to paintings by contemporary masters cannot be very great, but since none of the latter are known, definite conclusions as to the relationship are hazardous.

The two long sides of the sarcophagus are both decorated with illustrations to three stories, but each of these illustrations contains two scenes or acts of the same event. Beginning at the foot end of the right side, the first two scenes refer to the story of Wang Lin, who was a paragon not only of filial but also of fraternal piety. He was an orphan and devoted himself entirely to the care of his parents' tomb and of his younger brother. He remained at his post even when the bandits came to the village and everyone else fled away. The bandits took the younger boy as hostage and were going to eat him for supper. When Wang Lin heard about this, he hurried with bound hands before the bandit chief, presenting himself as a substitute for the brother. This action inspired magnanimity in the

bandits, who released the two brothers and went away (Pl.24).

Both acts of the story are clearly depicted. In the first the robber chief on horseback and some of his retainers are just coming right out between the trees, and one of the robbers is leading the boy by a rope around his neck. But Wang Lin has thrown himself on his knees with hands bound behind his back right in front of the approaching troop. In the second act the same figures are seen from the back; the chief and his retainers are returning to the mountains, while Wang Lin and his brother are escaping between the cliff-shaped side wings to the right.

The next scene illustrates an episode from the story of the filial Ts'ai Shun. He too was an unfailing guardian of his mother even after her death. This was proven one day when a fire broke out while the coffin of the mother was still standing in the house. All the neighbouring buildings were soon in flames. But as Ts'ai Shun flung himself upon the coffin and uttered loud cries to heaven, the fire skipped his house, whereas all the adjoining buildings were burnt to the ground. The violence of the fire is clearly depicted by the flames playing around a minor building and the vain efforts of some villagers to extinguish it, two of them bringing large buckets with water. In the adjoining house Ts'ai Shun is standing by the coffin bending down in a deep curve, his face covered by a long scarf. A little dog is seated in front of the house (Pl.25).

The third illustration on this side is to the story of Tung Yung, the filial youth who borrowed money to pay the expenses of his father's funeral, and as he failed to repay it, became the bondsman of his creditor. On returning from the funeral he met a young lady, who asked him to marry her. They went together to the creditor to arrange about the debt.

¹ The sarcophagus was discussed by Ikuto Okumura in Japanese in his publication *The Egg-plant*, 1936, and more closely analysed by Alexander C. Soper in articles in the *Art Bulletin*, June 1941: "Early Chinese Landscape Painting", and September 1948: "Life-Motion and the Sense of Space in Early Chinese Representational Art".



FIGURE 15. The Black Warrior of the North. The Snake Encircling the Tortoise and a Man behind. Engraving on a stone forming the end of a sarcophagus. Nelson Gallery of Art, Kansas City.

The latter said he would require 300 pieces of silk, a quantity which the young lady was able to produce within a month. Then she said to him, "I am the Spinning Maid, sent by God to help you as a reward for your filial piety"; and with that she ascended on high.

The engraving shows Tung Yung labouring the ground with his hoe under the supervision of the old man who is seated watching in a small cart (the father or the creditor?); and then again, holding his hoe, but now speaking to a lovely maid in long, trailing gown who is carrying a spinning-rod. The bucolic atmosphere of the scene receives a charming accent from the two graceful fawns which are playing among the stones in the foreground (Pl.28).

Turning to the other side of the sarcophagus, we find closest to the foot end an illustration marked "The filial grandson Yüan Ku", i.e. the virtuous boy whose filial conduct became a lesson to his father. The desire of Yüan Ku's parents was to get rid of an old grandfather, and with such intentions the decrepit old man was carried away into the woods. Yüan Ku was obliged to assist his father in doing this, as may be observed in the first half of the engraving. But as the man and the boy turned to go back home, the latter took the litter along with him. The father found this extraordinary and told the boy that there was no further need for the litter, to which Yüan Ku remarked: "But there will be when you grow old!" - words which made the father change his mind and bring back the old grandfather from the woods. This momentous conversation between the man apparently making haste to withdraw from the woods, and the youth, who is walking more hesitatingly with the litter under his arm, while the old man, who is huddling under a gnarled old tree, looks helplessly towards the withdrawing figures, is the motif of the picture (Pl.26).

The following scene illustrates the story about Kuo Chü, who was so poor that he could not feed his family, consisting of his wife, his mother and a little son. One day he said to the wife: "The boy eats too much; there is nothing left for our old mother,

Let us bury the child. We may have other sons but we can never have another mother." He started to dig a hole in the ground but soon came upon an ingot of gold inscribed with the words, "God's gift to Kuo Chü; let no one deprive him of it". This pleasant discovery may be seen in the engraving, where Kuo Chü's wife is seated on the ground with the baby in her arms. In the sequence we see man and wife marching briskly, carrying the jar with the ingot on a pole on their shoulders, and finally standing before the old mother, who is sitting on a raised platform, with offerings of food in their hands.

The last drawing illustrates episodes from the early life of the man who became the emperor Shun. He was a filial son who worked faithfully for his cruel father, who after a second marriage heaped all the paternal blessings on Shun's step-brother Hsiang. Once when Shun was digging a well, it was decided to bury him in the hole. In the picture the younger brother is carrying a large stone on his shoulders to throw into the hole, but Shun had foreseen this, and he escaped through a tunnel leading out through another well. This did not quench his filial assiduity; it became generally known and recognized even by the emperor Yao, who made Shun his heir and gave him his two daughters Nü-ying and O-huang in marriage. The young ladies appear in rich attire with fluttering scarves and ribbons before their old father, the emperor, who is accompanied by the young man and two carriers of ceremonial fans. This scene of solemn courtly demeanour forms a striking contrast to the exertion and agitation of Shun and his enemies in the preceding scene (Pl.27).

Our notes about the contents of the various stories of filial and fraternal piety may serve to disclose some of the entertaining characteristics which have been brought out in such a graphic manner in the illustrations. The artistic interpretation of some of the motifs, such as the episodes from the stories of Tung Yung, of Shun, and of Kuo Chü, is so vividly descriptive, not to say naturalistic; it brings to mind the titles of certain illustrative paintings by Chêng Fa-shih and Chan Tzū-ch'ien

such as, for instance, *Men and Carriages at Loyang* or *North Ch'i Men Hunting*, by the former, and *Men with Horses in Ch'ang-an* or *Men Hunting with Spears*, by the latter, *i.e.* scenes of actual life staged in landscapes. These masters were active mainly after the middle of the century, but they may have followed a tradition of style which existed since the previous generation and which has left some traces in these stone-engravings.

The interest of these illustrations does not depend merely on the expressiveness of single figures, but also, and to a larger extent, on the combination of the figures with such elements of landscape as the trees, the rocks, and the ground. The landscapes form, as said before, a continuous setting for the figures and may thus lead our thoughts to scroll-paintings of later times. Most prominent as structural members in the compositions are the trees; they are placed preferably at the very edge of the composition, rising with tall bare trunks and branching into leafy crowns of various species (willows, alanthus, ginko, etc.) at the top. These trees form a sort of foreground screens, or colonnades, between which the actors become visible (as in the scenes of *Ts'ai Shun* and *Tung Yung*), while their leafy crowns wave high above the heads of the figures. The arrangement has probably been introduced in view of the shape of the rather long and low slabs; it serves to divide the space into sections and to frame the successive scenes.

Other elements partly used for the same purpose are the sharply cut vertical stones or cliffs – cut as thin as cardboard – which fill much of the space in these designs. But whereas the trees mostly are used to mark a kind of foreground screen, the silhouetted cliffs which are placed diagonally in relation to the picture plane, are effective means for suggesting a third dimension. This may be best observed in the two scenes from the story of *Wang Ling*, where the robber chief on horseback is just coming out of a mountain defile and then riding back into another, seen from the front or from the back together with his horse.

The very capable and rather subtle artist who was responsible for the drawings reproduced in these engravings has tried out various devices for suggesting a continuous space in which the successive actions take place. In the *Ts'ai Shun* scene the open house is most effective in this respect; it is placed behind a row of trees, the roof lines of the façade and the adjoining side meeting in an obtuse angle. It is, as usual, drawn as from above, and the interior expanse of floor offers plenty of room for the large coffin. The third illustration on the same side includes two scenes from the story of *Tung Yung* and is essentially a somewhat fantastic but most effective landscape scenery in which the figures and the animals blend quite naturally with the manifold shapes of the stony ground, the tufts of grass, the shrubs and trees and the silhouetted cliffs which form a kind of screen leading diagonally from the background. This blending of the various elements is not simply a matter of form and juxtaposition but also of movement: the wavy lines of the soft willow branches are, so to say, reflected (or echoed) in the fluttering scarves of the young lady and the somewhat unexpected inequalities of the ground, in the swaying movements and positions of the figures.

Similar observations may be made in the engravings on the opposite side of the sarcophagus. In the scenes from the story of *Shun* there is a remarkable consonance between the rhythm of the trees and the slender figures, for instance, the two men on the hill who bend like windblown trunks under the heavy weight of the stone. By their position on the hill in the background they also serve to accentuate the third dimension. In the adjoining scene the crossing of the horizontal and vertical lines contribute to the same purpose. Yet the most important examples of the artist's success in creating ample space for the actions of the figures and the decorative interplay between them and the various elements of nature are the scenes from the story of *Kuo Chü*. The first scene of this story is staged, so to say, before the curtain at the very bottom edge of the picture, where we see *Kuo Chü* and his wife digging in the

ground, screened off from the rest of the composition by a rocky ledge. The next stage follows just above: the youthful couple are here walking briskly with fluttering garments, apparently anxious to arrive quickly at their goal with the precious jar. In the third act we find them standing in front of the broad dais or platform on which the old mother is seated. The figures, the trees and rocky ledges are drawn more or less in sideview or half-front view, but the dais is seen as from above. It spreads out like an open glade in the woods.

A further analysis of the means by which distance, movement and balancing rhythm have been rendered in these pictures may not be necessary and would perhaps tend to obscure the main issue of the artist, whose endeavour was to create interesting

illustrations. He did it evidently with a view to make them not only "telling" but also decorative. He realized to some extent the importance of continuous space, suggesting it by certain elements of landscape, and he had a highly developed sense for linear rhythm, but he still adhered to the traditional mode of writing down the design on a solid surface. To what extent the final result – i.e. the stone-engravings – actually correspond to the original intentions of the artist, is more than we can tell, but as it seems that the designs had been made with a special view to their transposition on stone, we are perhaps justified in considering these engravings as fairly reliable substitutes for a certain type of illustrative pictures which reached great popularity in the sixth century.

IV

Early Wall-paintings at Tun-huang

NO CHAPTER of the history of painting in China offers at present greater difficulties for a Western art-historian than the account of the wall-paintings in the cave temples at Tun-huang. The reasons for this are various, partly connected with the special aim and somewhat extraneous artistic character of these paintings, which detach them from the general current of evolution in China proper, but also with the historical and geographical conditions under which the paintings were produced. They are difficult of access and have too often been left out of general publications on Chinese painting produced in its homeland and elsewhere – a most regrettable discrepancy in view of the fact that they contain a larger and more important display of early religious paintings than can be found anywhere else in the Far East. It is only in recent years that the Chinese government has devoted special attention to a closer study and more effective protection to the Buddhist wall-paintings at Tun-huang.

It is no longer possible to pass over these paintings in silence by following the trodden path of Chinese *wén-jên* of former days – their importance as links in a wider sphere of Chinese art which extended over considerable parts of Central Asia is evident – but owing to the conditions indicated above, and most particularly to the scarcity of good reproductions, our presentation of these cave temples and their painted decorations must remain quite fragmentary. We can only discuss a few examples (accessible in reproductions) which may serve to illustrate some prominent stages in the stylistic development, and leave all attempts to establish definite schools and masters within this vast collection of anonymous paintings to students who may find opportunities of seeing more of them in the original and also in reproduction.

The so-called Ch'ien-fo tung (Caves of the Thousand Buddhas), situated close to the Tun-huang oasis on the westernmost border of China

proper, is the largest of the agglomerations of Buddhist cave temples that grew up between the fourth and the twelfth centuries at various places along the trade routes between China, Central Asia and India. Several of these foundations may still be seen, though in rather dilapidated condition, and some have become known also through illustrated publications, as for instance Wan fo-tung in the neighbourhood of Ansi, Tung ch'ien-fo tung and Hsi ch'ien-fo tung at Yü-mên, Mai-chi shan in the vicinity of T'ien-shui, and P'ing-ling ssü further westward on a confluent of the Yellow River. At all these places and several others in the same part of the country, artistic activity flourished abundantly in the service of Buddhist devotion. The fragments of paintings and sculptures which still remain at some of these places are, in part, well worth closer study, as witnessed by the exhibition held last autumn in Peking of copies of paintings and casts and photographs of sculptures at Mai-chi shan and P'ing-ling ssü. The cave temples at these places contain still some fine examples of the Northern and Eastern Wei periods as well as from the T'ang dynasty which no doubt in the near future will be allotted prominent places in the history of early Chinese art. But we must leave them and turn our

attention to the early paintings in the Tun-huang caves.¹

According to the inscription on the memorial tablet set up in 698, the first chapel dedicated to Buddha at Ch'ien-fo tung was made in 366 by the Indian monk Lo-tsun. This was followed by a second cave chapel made by the monk Fa-liang, and then gradually by similar foundations established by order of private donors. The number of caves seems to have been growing rapidly, because, if we may accept the statement on the memorial tablet, there were at that time (in the T'ang period) "more than a thousand caves". It may, however, be questioned whether the number of the caves was ever definitely certified, because sometimes it was made to include minor cavities also and niches adjoining the larger caves, while at other times it was limited to the actual chapel caves. It should furthermore be remembered that the caves are carved quite irregularly into the mountains, in two, three, or more layers, and all the caves were probably never accessible at the same time. The destruction or transformation of earlier caves, moreover, was frequent during successive periods of religious and artistic florescence; caves erected in the Six Dynasties period were thus in some instances transformed

¹ The Tun-huang wall-paintings are known to western students mainly through the 376 plates in Paul Pelliot's fundamental publication *Les Grottes de Touen Huang*, vols. I-VI, Paris, 1920-1924. It is greatly to be regretted that the distinguished explorer never completed the corpus of plates with a text volume. The photographs made by Pelliot's assistant are also in many instances far from distinct, yet they form the largest series of reproductions from this place published up to the present date.

Among the discussions of the materials made available through Pelliot's publication should be mentioned in particular L. Bachhofer's article "Die Raumdarstellung in der Chinesischen Malerei des ersten Jahrtausend nach Chr.," in the *Münchener Jahrbuch der Bildenden Kunst*, 1931.

A new epoch for the study and discussion of the Tun-huang wall-paintings was started in 1943 with the foundation of the Tun-huang Research Institute by the Chinese Government. This institute has passed through many vicissitudes owing to the political upheavals in China, but has survived under the leadership of Mr. Chang Shu-hung. A number of technicians and artists have been occupied in uncovering partly hidden decorations and in the preparation of copies of the wall-paintings. A certain number of these copies were shown at exhibitions in

Shanghai and Peking in 1946 and 1954 and some of them have been reproduced in colour with short comments: Cf. *Tun-huang tai-piao-tso hsien-chi*, 1946(?) and *Tun-huang pi-hua chi* 1954(?). For additional information, see Shih Yai, *Tun-huang shih-shih hui-hsiang t'i shih*, Ch'engtu 1947 and Hsieh Chih-lin, *Tun-huang shih-shih chi*, Ch'engtu, 1949. The two last-named publications are mainly the results of the copying and researches pursued by Chang Ta-ch'ien and his assistants during their stay in Tun-huang 1943-1946. A more complete historical account of the Ch'ien-fo tung is contained in some articles in *Wên-wu t'ao-k'ao tsü-liao*, II, 4 and 5 (May 1951), such as: Su Po, *Mo Kao-ku tsü-shih nien-piao*; Hsiang Ta, *Tun-huang i-shu k'ai lun*; Chang Shu-hung, *Tun-huang i-shu ti yüan-liu yü nei-yung*; and Wang Hsün, *Tun-huang pi-hua chung piao-hsien ti chung-ku hui-hua*.

Among the western students who visited Tun-huang at the end of the forties and made some more or less successful colour photographs at the place should be mentioned Professor Millard B. Rogers and Mr. John B. Vincent together with Irene Vincent, who has published a vivid description of the place and a picturesque account of the way thither under the title *The Sacred Oasis*, London, 1954.

and repainted first in the T'ang and then in the Sung period, changes which also make it impossible to state how many caves were originally erected in the different periods.

Turning to Pelliot's well-known publication *Les Grottes de Touen Houang*, which for over thirty years has served as the main source of information for western students, we find that there are 171 numbered caves on the plan and in addition to these a certain number of adjoining caves marked with letters, making a total of nearly 300. This numbering is quoted in most western discussions of the cave paintings. A different way of numbering the caves was introduced by the well-known Chinese painter Chang Ta-ch'ien and his collaborators, who stayed at Tun-huang in 1946. They followed another system of counting and arrived at 309 caves. Finally, a third system was introduced two or three years later by the National Art Research Institute of Tun-huang, which included several half-hidden and newly-uncovered caves, and resulted in the marking of 469 caves. This numbering is now generally accepted in China and will also be followed as far as possible in our references to the various chapels.¹

It should furthermore be recalled that the work accomplished by the members of the Research Institute of Tun-huang during the last decade has been of importance for the protection of the pictures and for making them better known and appreciated all over the world. We have no occasion to dwell here on the practical improvements in the way of supporting structures, ladders and bridges executed at Tun-huang during the last five or six years, nor on the cleaning and uncovering of hitherto hidden pictures, but it may be pointed out for the benefit of students that great progress has been made in the copying of the wall-paintings, a work which has been carried out by various *équipes* of painters during a decade or more. This becomes evident if one compares the early copies with the most recent of the same pictures and also with colour photographs made of the original paintings. The earlier ones have not the same documentary and

artistic value as the later more faithful and subtle copies, yet it is the early ones which up to date have served for practically all the reproductions in colour produced in China. The drawback became clear to attentive observers when some of the most recent copies were exhibited in Peking in September 1954. They revealed artistic qualities of a superior kind which could hardly be discovered in the early copies.

The painted decorations of the Ch'ien-Fo tung reach over a period of nearly a thousand years, or even longer if we include among them the pictures in four or five minor chapels made in the nineteenth century. The earliest paintings still preserved are of the Northern Wei period (middle of fifth to early sixth century), and the latest from the Yüan period (1280-1367). Inscriptions with the names of the donors and indications of *nien hao* (reign periods) or of definite years are found in a number of caves and have been reported in the recent Chinese publications. Most of these dated inscriptions are from the relatively long reign of the T'ang dynasty, when the artistic activity at Tun-huang reached its apogee before it began to ebb out during the occupation of the Tibetans. The dated inscriptions of earlier epochs are less numerous, yet there are some of the Wei and the Sui dynasties which offer support for a chronological grouping of the material. The main arguments for such a study must, however, be drawn from observations of the style of the paintings and also from the architectural features of the rooms. This may be done with a fair amount of accuracy in regard to the pictures which are accessible in adequate reproductions, but unfortunately these are as yet a small minority.

The number of the early wall-paintings was evidently considerably reduced during succeeding

¹ The number of still existing caves from the successive periods is indicated as follows by Chang Shu-hung: 22 of the Wei period, 90 of the Sui, 206 of T'ang, 33 of the Five Dynasties, 103 of the Sung period, 3 of the period of the Hsi Hsia reign, 8 of the Yüan period, and 5 of the Ch'ing period. Hsiang Ta's list is slightly different: in arriving at the same total number he leaves out five caves for which no definite period can be indicated from inscriptions or from the style of the paintings.

ages not only through dilapidation and exposure but also, and still more, through restorations and re-dedications of a number of chapels at later periods, when the archaic pictures were covered up in part by more modern painters. According to the Chinese authorities previously quoted, there are at present twenty-two caves with more or less preserved paintings of the Northern and Western Wei periods, but the original number must have been more than the double. To enumerate them all would be of little avail without photographs; we shall consequently limit our discussions to a few caves with relatively well-preserved paintings which may be reproduced at least in part. These may here serve as examples of the first period of artistic activity at Ch'ien-fo tung, which for stylistic reasons is of the greatest historical interest.

The most prominent and best known among these early caves are the numbers 257 (P.110) and 249 (P.101). They may with reasonable probability be dated shortly after the persecution of the Buddhist religion in the years 445-446. Other early caves, likewise known through reproductions, are the numbers 272 (P.188 J), 288 (P.120 P) and 251 (P.103). They were probably decorated before the end of the fifth century, though in a somewhat cruder and more rustic manner.

Most of the early caves had porches or façades built of wood, and some of the rooms had a central pillar with niches, while others had a larger Buddha statue over the main altar, facing the entrance. The nimbuses or *mandorlas* surrounding such Buddha statues of clay were painted on the wall and also some soaring *apsaras* (heavenly musicians), adoring Bodhisattvas, and bhikshus represented as attendants of the Buddha. This arrangement is harmoniously carried out in cave 249, where the main figure is a very youthful Buddha wearing a mantle of soft and thin material clinging closely to the body. The modelling is here more sensitive than in most sculptures of the Northern Wei period known to us and the linear rhythm softly tempered (Pl.32).

On the side wall in the same cave may be seen a

painted Buddha, standing in frontal attitude, surrounded by a large *mandorla* and flanked by Bodhisattvas and soaring *apsaras*. The stylization of the tall figure and the drawn out wing-like mantle-lobes give this figure the appearance of a statue in bronze or stone rather than of a painting. The statuesque appearance has also become accentuated by the darkening or oxidization of the flesh tones and the outlines. The figure seems thus very closely united with the background wall and is a striking example of the intimate correspondence in style and spirit between sculpture and painting at this particular stage in their evolution. This mode of religious imagery was to no small extent due to influences transmitted by the Toba tribe from Central Asia (as witnessed by the rich supply of exquisite Northern Wei sculptures), but these influences or models had to be transplanted into the fertile soil of the Chinese mind in order to grow into full bloom and gain the significance of great works of art.

A further analysis of the hieratic figures which are placed in dominating positions in several of the caves may not be necessary in this connexion. They are often framed by double or triple rows of small Buddha-images (*i.e.* the "Thousand Buddhas") above and corresponding rows of musicians, supporting gnomes or donors below¹ (*cf.* Pl.30). By the use of such composite frames or rows of small figures a horizontal division of the wall spaces is obtained. The middle section of this is reserved either for continuous groups of seated Buddhas and standing Bodhisattvas as in cave 428 (P.135), or for illustrative paintings, which are, so to speak, unrolled in long bands over the side-walls. These are the

¹ The colour effect of the early wall-paintings has changed a great deal during the centuries as a result of the oxidization of certain tones. This is vividly described by Irene Vincent in the suggestive account of her visit to Ch'ien-fo tung, in 1948. She writes: "The original pinks were in varying shades which oxidized not only to grey but to differing tones of brown, from *coffe au lait* to a deep chocolate tinged with grey. The dramatic white outlines of the eyes and nose appeared earlier as highlights, afterwards thrown into sharp relief by the oxidization of the original flesh colours." Time has no doubt added a softer hue to many paintings which in their original condition were more garish.

picture chronicles based on popular versions of the Jātaka stories, depicting with much verve and animation episodes from the previous lives of Śakyamuni Buddha. The mode of representation is in these horizontal bands much the same as in the Chinese scroll-paintings of later times. Excellent examples of such picture chronicles on the wall are found in caves 257 (P.110) and 428 (P.135).

The pictures in the first-named cave illustrate scenes from the Ruru Jātaka referring to Buddha's incarnation in the form of a golden gazelle. One day this compassionate creature saw a profligate who was on the point of drowning himself and saved the man. When the king of Benares heard about this wonderful animal, he asked for someone who could take him to the place where the animal lived. The man who had been saved by it offered to do so, lured by the promise of a great reward. But then, when the king was poisoning his arrow in order to shoot the precious gazelle, the animal reproached the profligate for his evil action, a warning that was overheard by the king, who now turned his wrath towards the man and threatened to kill him. But from this he was again averted by the gazelle, who uttered some words of mercy before disappearing. Such is the gist of the story, but the painter has elaborated it in a number of successive scenes, first from the palace, where the king and his queen appear in a frame of highly simplified (symbolic) architecture and in the company of wasp-waisted court-ladies, or again travelling by cart and on horseback to the place where the gazelle appears in four successive situations, *viz.*: with the saved man on his back, receiving the thanks of the kneeling man, lying down as if resting, and finally standing up to meet the royal hunting party.¹ The outdoor scenes are enacted in a continuous landscape which, however, at some places is screened or divided by rows of small pointed hills which may be said to mark a cadence in the continuous composition. By this simple device the painter has marked the successive stages in his account and at the same time created spatial units in which the actions take

place. The method is here as yet tentative rather than fully developed, but nevertheless noticeable as something otherwise unknown in Chinese painting. It may be said to reveal something of the same striving for three-dimensionality which also is apparent in the modelling of the figures, as previously remarked. The artists who did most of the early wall-paintings in the Ch'ien-fo tung had evidently not received their fundamental training in China but further west, at the art-centres then existing at Turfan, Kutch, Khotan, and other places along the western routes.

It may, however, be of interest to consider some further developed examples of the mode of composition noticed above. We find them in cave 428 (P.135), where episodes from two different Jātakas are illustrated in long horizontal compositions placed in three band-like tiers, the one on the top of the other, on the two side-walls. The picture on the right wall represents the story of Mahasattva and the starving tigress. It starts at the upper right-hand corner where Mahasattva and his two brothers are taking leave of their father, who sits in a two-storeyed pavilion surrounded by tall trees. In the next scene the action starts; the three men on horseback are making for the forest and then, in the following scene, hunting for pleasure. A tiger is chasing some deer behind the ridge of hills in the top zone. The last scene in the uppermost tier shows the men at a halt; they are speaking about the evils of the world, concluding that a religious life would be decidedly preferable. This last scene balances the first and is likewise distinguished by a strictly vertical setting (Pl.35).

The story is continued at the left end of the middle zone: the three princes proceed again on their journey. They pass through a mountain gorge and

¹ All these scenes may be observed in the pictures reproduced on Pls.33, 34, but in addition to these we reproduce other wall-paintings from the same cave on Pls.34A, B, C, D; the first representing one of the many sections of the Thousand Buddhas to be seen at Tun-huang, while the others represent scenes from the Buddha legend which have not been identified. They are all excellent examples of the earliest style at this place.

arrive at a place where a hungry tigress is seated in the midst of her seven starving cubs. The men have dismounted from their horses and are expressing their compassion in vivid gestures; but what can they do? Then we see the two elder brothers riding away in accordance with Mahasattva's wishes, while he takes off his clothes and places himself naked on the ground before the tiger. But the beast will not attack him. Only after he had cut himself with a sharp bamboo pole, so as to bleed, and thrown himself down a precipice did the tiger devour him. This is the last scene in the middle zone, illustrating the culmination of the self-sacrifice of Mahasattva. It stands out dominantly between the mountains in the centre of this zone.

In the bottom tier the story begins once more from the right: When the two elder brothers find the remains of Mahasattva they show great excitement; they build a stupa for his relics and kneel in adoration on both sides of it. Then they ride away in flying gallop to bring the sad news to their father; the queen and the "Blue Garment" (?) are kneeling before the king. The following scene, which is not a textual illustration, brings the story to an ideal conclusion. The meditating Buddha appears as a future incarnation of Mahasattva and is adored by a man and a horse. The very last scene in this zone is badly worn and has apparently no connexion with the story told above.

The corresponding pictures on the opposite wall illustrate other Jātakas, i.e. in the top zone the story about the human monkey, who saved a man who had fallen down a precipice, and then was stoned to death, and in the two lower zones scenes from the Vessantara Jātaka dealing mainly with the actions of a compassionate prince and his family. The pictures are of the same type as those described above, but the landscape is more monotonous, the trees fewer, and the mountains like rows of interblending silhouettes. Their main function is to serve as frame and background to the figure scenes.

Further progress in the representation of illustrative scenes, in which the rhythm of the continuous

narration grows intense and sometimes confused, may be observed in cave 285 (P.120 N) which, according to the inscription, was executed in the year 538-39 during the Western Wei dynasty. It is Ch'ien-fo tung (Pls.36-38). The walls are covered with paintings from floor to ceiling, while other more airy designs of birds and dragons and winged figures fill the four sloped panels which form the sides of the ceiling. The statues which stood in the niches in the walls are lost, but the large arched aureoles with rich floral designs are well preserved, and above them follow, on the side-walls, illustrative scenes or (on the opposite side) groups of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. The main Buddha is enthroned between double rows of Bodhisattvas and occupies the central position opposite the entrance.

The style of the hieratic figures is in accordance with that of the preceding caves but with a marked touch of decorative refinement. The wide mantles, dhōtis and fluttering scarves of the Bodhisattvas are all drawn out in long curves and pointed lobes, though they are not quite as flat and wing-like as in the earlier paintings; the materials of the garments are softer, the lines more graceful (Pl.38).

The added element of gracefulness is still more noticeable in the illustrative scenes which represent episodes from the story about the conversion of the five hundred robbers through the preaching of Buddha. They are told with great vivacity in compositions which are no longer divided or screened by slanting rows of small hills or similar devices. There is a medley of armed men on foot and on horseback moving in every direction contrasting with the shivering naked prisoners, all represented with an *esprit de raconteur* that makes them entertaining. In the more peaceful scenes (after the fighting) where the men are kneeling in rows at the feet of the (much larger) Buddha, the pulsating life-breath finds expression in the deer we see bounding between the hills and the trees bursting into blossom (Pl.36).

Incessant movement and sprightly elegance are developed to the utmost degree in the designs on the

slanted panels which form the sides of the pyramidal ceiling. To describe in detail the fantastic creatures which are here soaring and whirling about on wings in a fairy world seems hardly possible; they are not meant to be analysed but to stimulate the imagination and delight the eyes with their fluttering in the wind. There are no definite divisions, nor is there a unifying framework in this celestial region, but all the disparate elements, devils, dragons, gryphons, or bird-like human beings seem to be infused with the same intense life-breath as governs all their movements in this cosmic pattern. The painters have evidently drawn their inspiration from Taoist mythology rather than from Buddhist sources, in spite of the fact that their pictures of the celestial world were to serve as canopies over a sanctuary dedicated to the Buddha. This blending of motifs borrowed from disparate sources is typical of the Chinese attitude towards the new religion and it is also, more or less, reflected in the pictorial style. The legacy of Han art is evident in the sinewy strength and supple grace of the linear transformations, whereas the rather vivid colouring and modelling in light and shade may be indications of closer connexions with the Buddhist art-centres further West (cf. Pl. 38 upper, Pl. 39 lower).

The element of colour has no doubt always been of fundamental importance for the effect of these mural paintings, but it can hardly be fully appreciated except in front of the originals. If we may draw some conclusions from the copies exhibited in Peking 1954, the colour scheme shows a tendency to grow lighter, more luminous and festive with the years. The change seems to coincide with the gradual predominance of Chinese influence at this place. The strange way of putting on high lights with broad strokes of white in contrast with the body colour and heavy black outlines, which is so characteristic of many of the Northern Wei paintings, is replaced by a less coarse modelling and brighter lines in greenish, blue and yellowish tones. This can be observed in the above-mentioned paintings of the Western Wei period (cave 285), but it becomes still

more obvious in paintings executed in the Sui period (581-618).

In spite of its short duration the Sui dynasty marked a hey-day for Buddhist art in China. The building of temples was carried out on a larger scale than ever before, the production of stone sculpture was abundant and religious painting flourished under the guidance of prominent masters. Figurative art had reached a relative degree of perfection and technical mastery; the marble statues of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas reveal a sense of tactile beauty which had not found expression in the more strictly conventionalized Wei statues, and something of the same change seems to have taken place in painting. Here too a gradual release from the linear mode becomes noticeable.

According to present reckoning there must have been two or three dozen caves of the Sui period at Ch'ien-fu tung. Two of them are marked with dated inscriptions (of the fourth and fifth years of K'ai-huang) corresponding to 584-585; others may be dated on stylistic grounds, though it is in some cases difficult to draw the line between Sui and Early T'ang; the two epochs blend into each other quite naturally.

A fragment of a large composition in cave 390 representing a lady donor accompanied by some maids and musicians, is here communicated as a typical example of Sui figure-painting (Pl. 39 upper). It has been made accessible in copies and reproductions and, although it is simply a minor piece of a larger ensemble, it is a well-balanced, attractive design portraying such slim and graceful young women as were common only in the Sui period. The main person is the lady who is advancing towards the right. The train of her long garment is supported by three girls, while two attendants follow her with flowers in their hands and an orchestra of eight female musicians is playing the slow rhythm of a solemn air on p'i-p'as, harp, flutes and chimes, a music which seems to be reflected in the measured movements of the young women proceeding towards the newly-opened cave to be consecrated.

They have lost something of their original beauty through oxidization of the rosy flesh-colours, which have turned black, but their trailing garments and fluttering scarves are still greenish or blue, harmonizing with the soft girlish grace of these high-waisted typical representatives of the Sui nobility.

Another, and somewhat earlier, phase of Sui art may be observed in the long horizontal compositions in cave 290, which stretch over the side walls in three layers or tiers like the successive chapters of some unrolled picture chronicle. The compositions are filled with a great number of small figures in combination with trees and simple buildings, and as they are more or less repetitions in colour and design they give the impression of textile patterns rather than of detached pictorial units. The continuous light background, screened by rows of plume-like trees, and the zigzag lines of the slanting blue roofs bring, so to speak, all these (fifty or more) quasi-miniature scenes into a unified decorative pattern. They are not products of the same line of pictorial evolution as the illustrative scenes in the earlier caves; the emphasis is here less on the creation of spatial units for the successive scenes than on the representation of quasi-naturalistic figures in action. The shadowy trees in the background and the thin roofs or sheds on frail supports, with which many of the figure scenes are framed, do not suggest much of a third dimension. The main concern of the artist seems to have been to produce vivid illustrations of certain events rather than pictorial representations. He is a subtle and entertaining fabulist reminding us

of some of the Othoman miniaturists, but not a very important painter properly speaking.

Most of the motifs seem to be inspired by the Lalita Vistara or some corresponding account of the life of the last human Buddha. One notices here the birth of the prince Siddhārta, the events of his early life, such as the demonstration of his miraculous powers in the gymnasium, the simultaneous births in the animal kingdoms, the three encounters, and other familiar scenes in which also horses and wagons, hunters chasing deer, and a ploughman with his ox appear (Pl.40).

To enumerate all these scenes individually and define their motifs may not be necessary, nor is it always easy because some of them are much alike and their illustrative context is not always very clear. They formed a picture chronicle made not only to satisfy the religious needs of simple donors but also to entertain them, for which purpose the painter has now and then added a dash of humour. He was evidently an artist with a ready wit and a light hand at the service of a fertile creative imagination.

Judging by the formal characteristics of his work, he may have followed the general lines of some picture chronicles which had been elaborated somewhere in Central Asia before they became known in China. The well-established intercommunications between Tun-huang and the oases along the roads further west were evidently maintained also in the Sui periods as illustrated by paintings in several caves of which we have no reproductions which would make a closer description of these particular pictures possible.

V

The Khotanese and other Central Asian Painters

NONE OF the paintings which decorate the sanctuaries of Ch'ien-fo tung is marked with a painter's signature; the names which occur in some of the inscriptions refer to the donors and not to the

painters, and we have no documentary information about the artists. They worked, so to speak, *ad maiorem gloriam Dei* and may in some cases have been lay brothers of monastic orders with their

centres at Tun-huang, while others were itinerant artists, specializing in certain kinds of religious painting, who came to Tun-huang because of the local demand for votive paintings. And if we may draw some conclusions from the predominating characteristics of their works, these painters had been in closer touch with the kind of religious art then flourishing at some of the oases further west, such as Turfan, Khotan, and Kutchia, than with the more traditional indigenous type of painting favoured in the capitals of China.

In view of the Western or Central Asian influence in the wall-paintings in the Ch'ien-fo tung it may be of interest to recall here some of the information regarding foreign painters active in China towards the end of the sixth and during the seventh century that has been handed down by such early recorders as Yao Tsui, Chang Yen-yüan and Chu Ching-hsüan. Most of what these writers have to tell is strictly speaking not of an historical kind; they repeat rather loosely what they have learned through hearsay or from earlier writers, but they arrive nevertheless at an approximate appreciation of the artists under discussion and a definition of their individual characteristics, if not of their historical position.

The earliest among the foreign painters men-

tioned by Yao Tsui in *Hsü hua p'in* and then by Chang Yen-yüan (who repeats the records of his predecessor) were probably three monks, said to have come to China in the Liang dynasty (502-536).¹ They seem to have been active in the South and may have arrived by sea rather than by the land-route. There is no hint about where or what they painted, but judging by their land of origin, we would assume that the dominating influence in their art was Indian.

Ts'ao Chung-ta was evidently a more important painter who has left deeper traces in the history of Chinese painting; he is more extensively recorded by writers of various epochs, yet no more definite as an historical personality than the above-mentioned monk painters. According to Chang Yen-yüan, he came from the country of Ts'ao (Sogdiana) and reached great fame under the Northern Ch'i dynasty (550-577). This was based on his skill in painting Hindu (Indian) images... which according to tradition, "had a supernatural effect". They were made after "the manner of foreign countries; there was no one equal to him at the time". In another connexion, when describing the transmission of painting through masters and pupils (in Part II of *Ming-hua chi*) Chang Yen-yüan goes still further in his praise of the painter and writes: "Ts'ao created

¹ The information regarding the three monk painters is borrowed from Yao Tsui's *Hsü hua p'in*; it has often been quoted and contains the following: "The monk Chi-ti-chü, a foreigner, middle class. The monk Mo-lo-p'u-t'i, also a foreigner, middle class. The monk Chia-fo-t'o, middle class; a Ch'an monk from India. He was a man of superior conduct and performed many miracles. At the beginning he was with the Wei, the Wei emperor esteemed him highly. When the Sui came into power, the Sui emperor built the Shao-lin temple on Sung-shan for him. There may still be seen on the door of one of the cells a picture of a spirit by Chia-fo-t'o." (A note inserted here refers to *Hsü Kao-sung chuan* and mentions pictures by this monk representing people from Fu-li besides other strange things.) The text winds up as follows: "Yao Tsui says: As to the three monks mentioned above, one cannot tell whether their works are good or bad, because the manner of the foreigners (barbarians) is quite different from that of the Chinese".

Chang Yen-yüan borrowed his information not only from *Hsü hua p'in* (c.552) but also from *Chên-kuan kang-sü hua-shih* (c.655) and *Kao-sung chuan* (Appendix), as demonstrated by Pelliot in his article "Notes sur quelques artistes des Six

Dynasties et des T'ang", in *T'oung Pao*, vol. XXII, 1923. According to Pelliot, the monk painter Chia-fo-t'o should be identified with the Dhyan master Fo-t'o who lived at the beginning of the sixth century in Shao-lin ssü in Honan. This monk painter of the early Liang dynasty (c.490-525) has by later writers been combined and merged with the somewhat mythical Bodhidharma.

Another Indian monk mentioned by Chang Yen-yüan among the T'ang painters was Chin-kang San-tsang, a native of the "Country of Lions", i.e. Sindh or Ceylon: "He specialized in painting Buddhist images of the Western Countries, grave and dignified, not like ordinary paintings. In the pagoda of Kuang-fu ssü in Loyang were some simple images sketched by San-tsang."

The discussion about foreign artists active in China during the Six Dynasties and the early T'ang period has been renewed by Alexander C. Soper in two articles called "Literary Evidence for Early Buddhist Art in China", published in *Oriental Art*, vol. II, 1949, and in *Artibus Asiae*, vol. XVI, 1953. They are mainly based on Omura Seigai's *History of Chinese Sculpture*, but also further explained and enlarged by references to the Chinese source material used by Omura.

(new kinds of) Buddha motifs. There are three manners of painting Buddhas; one is the manner of the Ts'ao school, another the manner of the Chang (Sêng-yü) school, and the third the manner of the Wu (Tao-tzū) school."

This statement as well as some passages in the descriptive note by Chang Yen-yüan about the painter have given rise to various hypothetical conclusions regarding the origin of Ts'ao Chung-ta and his position in the history of Chinese painting. This is hardly the place for a detailed report about these discussions; we refer those who are interested in historical research to Pelliot's investigation of the whole problem by which he refutes the traditional opinion that Ts'ao came from the Western Countries. According to Pelliot, Ts'ao was born in China and honoured with a high position at the court of the Northern Ch'i and the Sui emperors in Ch'ang-an (up to about 590).¹ But wherever he may have been born, it is evident that his artistic education must have included contacts with Indian or pseudo-Indian art. His wall-paintings in K'ai-yüan ssü and other Buddhist temples in the capital contained features of style and iconography which seemed new and strange to the Chinese, and gave birth to the statement that Ts'ao started a special school of religious painting different from that of his predecessor Chang Sêng-yü and his still more famous successor Wu Tao-tzū.

As no paintings by Ts'ao Chung-ta or documented imitations of his works have survived, we have no means of expressing an opinion on his artistic innovations, but if we accept the words of some T'ang and Sung critics, we may nevertheless arrive at an idea about certain characteristic features in Ts'ao's paintings. Kuo Jo-hsü (c.1060-1110) is the most explicit in this respect; he wrote in *T'u-hua chien-wén chih*, vol.I, Chapt.9, as follows:

"Ts'ao's figures were clad in garments which clung to the body; they looked as if they had been drenched in water, whereas the mantles of Wu's figures were draped in billowing folds and looked as if they had been caught by the wind." He adds that

"the same distinction of the Ts'ao and the Wu school existed in sculpture": a remark which seems to imply that the Ts'ao style was the early Indian mode of representing thin garments as clinging closely to the body (seen in sculptures of the Gupta period and their off-shoots in Central Asia and China), while Wu introduced a bolder individual style of draping better fitted for the representation of bodily form, muscular tension and movement.

The juxtaposition of the two masters is somewhat arbitrary, since Wu was more than a hundred years younger than Ts'ao, but it certainly bears witness to the high esteem in which the older master was held. He was apparently recognized as the main representative of the foreign, i.e. Indian, mode in the religious painting of the time and had as such exercised great influence during the latter half of the sixth century.

It should also be noted that Chang Yen-yüan mentions (in *Ming-hua chi*, Chapt. IX) a pupil or follower of Ts'ao called Chin Chih-i, who "changed the harmonies and transformed the foreign manner into a Chinese. He was the originator of the change."

These remarks about Chin Chih-i's efforts to harmonize some of the new elements of style introduced by foreign artists with earlier indigenous traditions could no doubt with equal reason be applied to several painters at the beginning of the

¹ "Les Fresques de Touen-houang et les Fresques de M. Eumorfopoulos" in *Revue des Arts Asiatiques* (1928) vols.3,4. The article contains a critical account of the Chinese records relating to the activity of Ts'ao Chung-ta and a discussion of the historical and literary problems involved. Pelliot also passes in review earlier Western publications touching on the subject such as Hirth, *Fremde Einflüsse in der Chinesischen Kunst* (1896) and *Scraps from an Art Collector's Note-book* (1905), H. A. Giles, *An Introduction to the History of Chinese Pictorial Art* (1918) and A. Waley, *An Introduction to the History of Chinese Painting* (1923). In this last book Ts'ao is characterized as a man from the West who represented a foreign mode of painting in contradistinction to the Chinese.

The *Chên-kuan lung-sü hua-shih* by P'ei Hsiao-yüan (preface dated 639) contains a list of six paintings by Ts'ao, four of them portraits, one of horses, one an illustrative motif; in addition to these the author mentions also a wall-painting in the K'ai-yüan temple (not noted by Chang Yen-yüan).

T'ang period. The growing spirit of a national renaissance, also in the field of art, was strong enough to absorb important elements of foreign extraction and give them the stamp of the full blown T'ang mode. Some of the painters from Western countries active at the time in the Chinese capital were greatly honoured and esteemed particularly for their technical innovations by which they contributed to the great patrimony of Chinese art.

Two of the best known among these foreigners in Ch'ang-an were members of a noble Khotanese family called by the Chinese recorders Wei-ch'ih (probably Vijayā in Sanskrit).¹ They lived for two generations in China and are recorded with admiration by Chu Ching-hsüan and Chang Yen-yüan. The accounts about the older and the younger Wei-ch'ih are not exactly identical in the *T'ang-ch'ao ming-hua lu* and the *Ming-hua chi* (Chapters VIII and IX), but both are based on earlier traditions which supplement each other mutually. In combining the two sources we arrive at the following information about the painters.

The older of the two, Wei-ch'ih Po-chih-na who became known as the "Greater Wei-ch'ih", came to Ch'ang-an during the Sui reign and was enfeoffed by T'ang T'ai-tsung as a *chün kung* (provincial duke?). He became famous for his pictures of Buddhist subjects, but also for paintings of strange objects from foreign lands and of flowers which were remarkably life-like and painted in a free and bold manner.

Po-chih-na had two sons who became known as painters; one of them, named Chia-sêng, remained in Khotan, their home country (sometimes wrongly said to have been Tokharistan), while the other, named I-sêng, and later called the "Lesser Wei-ch'ih", settled in China. The circumstances under which he came to Ch'ang-an and the time of his arrival are indicated as follows in *T'ang-ch'ao ming-hua lu*: "At the beginning of the Chên-kuan era (627-650) the ruler of his native country sent him with a recommendation to the (Chinese) court, because of his great skill in painting".

The events connected with Wei-ch'ih I-sêng's removal to China are somewhat differently told in *Lî-tai ming-hua chi*, Chapter IX, where it is stated: "I-sêng arrived at the beginning of the (present) dynasty; he received an official residence and inherited the fief of a *chün kung*". The recorder is apparently not quite certain about the exact date of I-sêng's arrival in China, but does not hesitate to represent him as the inheritor of his father's(?) land-title and as the occupant of an official residence. Further information about this is given by Chang Yen-yüan in Chapter III, 4 of *Lî-tai ming-hua chi*, which is devoted to the wall-paintings in the temples in the capital. Wei-ch'ih I-sêng's name is here mentioned in connexion with half a dozen temples, among them Fêng-ên ssü, with the following note:

"On the north wall of the west precinct outside the middle triple gate are paintings by Wei-ch'ih I-sêng of kings of his own country with various relatives. Next, the small paintings under the pagoda are also by Wei-ch'ih. This temple was originally the residence of Wei-ch'ih I-sêng";² and, if we may draw some conclusion from its decoration with official portraits, it had also served as a kind of headquarters for the Khotanese royalties and painters who visited Ch'ang-an.

In a recent article by Professor Nagahiro of the Kyoto Institute for Humanistic Studies, it is pointed out that according to the monks' chronicle *Sung kao-sêng chuan*,³ a Khotanese monk called Wei-ch'ih Lo (*i.e.* the priest Chih-yen) also lived in the Fêng-ên ssü and it is furthermore stated that several individuals of the Wei-ch'ih clan as well as members of the royal family of Khotan visited China during the seventh century. The political and cultural relations between China and Khotan – then an important Buddhist centre – were evidently quite

¹ Cf. Waley, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

² Acker's translation in *Some T'ang and Pre-T'ang texts*, p. 290, Leiden 1954.

³ Cf. Nagahiro's article "On the Painter Wei-ch'ih I-sêng" in the Silver Jubilee Volume of the *Jimbus Kagaku Kenkyusho*, 1954.

close during the first century of the T'ang era, when Wei-ch'ih I-sêng executed some of his famous wall-paintings in the Buddhist temples in the capital.

None of the above-mentioned records contains any more definite statement regarding the chronology or date of I-sêng's activity in China, but it seems most probable that it extended over the second half of the seventh century and possibly a few years longer. According to Professor Nagahiro, who has tried to fix certain dates with the aid of the records about the building and repairs of various temples in which I-sêng worked, the painter was still alive in 710. We have no occasion to enter here into a further discussion of this problem, but it may be pointed out that the comparison between I-sêng and Yen Li-pên in the *T'ang-ch'ao ming-hua lu* (quoted below) also seems to imply that the two painters were practically contemporaries and equally famous. The statement about I-sêng's paintings in this chronicle runs as follows:

"I-sêng did a votive picture on the front of the pagoda of Tz'ü-ên ssü and also a composition of flowers rendered in relief and in their midst a thousand-armed and thousand-eyed Great Compassionate One (*i.e.* Kuanyin) of a more wonderful appearance than can be described in words. Behind the terrace of the Seven Precious Things (*Sapta Ratna*) at Kuang-chai ssü he painted the Conquering of Mara, a truly wonderful picture, full of strange and extraordinary things.

"His paintings, whether votive images, human figures, or flowers and birds, were always foreign-looking and not like Chinese things. It has been said that Wei-ch'ih I-sêng was equal to Yen Li-pên, but I think that Yen Li-pên never attained his highest qualities in his paintings of foreigners, and I have never heard that Wei-ch'ih did Chinese people. They worked in different fields but I have placed both of them in the *shên p'in* (*i.e.* the highest class)."

The records about I-sêng's wall-paintings in Tz'ü-ên ssü, Kuang-chai ssü and the previously mentioned Fêng-ên ssü might be completed with two or three other temple-names, but since all these

pictures are lost without a trace, the names of the temples are less interesting to us than the description of his manner of painting, *viz.* that he did his flowers in relief or (to use the Chinese expression) "concave and convex" (with an appearance of solidity).

This characterization of I-sêng's manner of painting is supplemented by the statement in *Li-tai ming-hua chi* (Chapter IX) that his "brush-work was tight and strong like bending iron or coiling (resilient) wire", while the brush-work of the older Wei-ch'ih "was free and vigorously expressive". The two leading art-historians of the T'ang period have thus picked out different points or features in the works of I-sêng when trying to characterize his style and technical peculiarities. Their descriptions are not irreconcilable, because Chu Ching-hsüan is referring only to the flowers in a picture on the Tz'ü-ên ssü pagoda, whereas Chang Yen-yüan emphasizes the strong quality of the coiling lines, which presumably would be best observable in the garments of the figures. They both considered Wei-ch'ih I-sêng as the foremost representative of a special school of Buddhist painting hitherto unknown in China.

Remembering these rather definite points in the descriptions of Wei-ch'ih I-sêng's method of painting, I was much surprised when last January I met with a picture in the gallery of C. T. Loo's successor, Mr. Frank Caro, in New York, which seemed to me almost like an illustration to the above statements. My examination of the rather dark and dirty picture was unfortunately cut short by local conditions, but according to recent information, the picture has been moved to the Museum in Boston and subjected to a careful cleaning, which has brought to light the following signature: "Ch'ên Yung-chih respectfully copied". Unfortunately master Ch'ên did not tell whose work he was copying.

The reasons for which the picture is mentioned as an illustration of Wei-ch'ih I-sêng's style may thus still hold good, even though it was executed only at the beginning of the eleventh century. The case may be rather similar to that of the Chang Hsüan scroll in

the Boston Museum, which has survived only in the emperor Hui-tsung's excellent copy.

Ch'ên Yung-chih was famous for his technical skill and refinement, but the fundamental style of the picture, on which he has written his name, is certainly not that of the Sung period.¹ It is distinctly pre-Sung in character and also to some extent non-Chinese. If we admit that and consider whatever is known about foreign painters active in China in pre-Sung times, we have to admit that Wei-ch'ih I-sêng is the only one who, according to the information at our disposal, might be said to fit these conditions and be accepted as the painter of the original of the picture here under discussion. The conclusion is indeed a supposition rather than an affirmation, but it is supported by literary traditions as well as considerations of style and technique. The statements of the leading T'ang critics quoted above are in this respect of primary importance, but it should also be noted that one of the best informed later art-historians, T'ang Hou, who wrote his *Ku-chin hua chien* (The Mirror of Old and Modern Painting) at the beginning of the fourteenth century, expressed himself about Wei-ch'ih I-sêng in words that confirm our conclusions, to quote: "Wei-ch'ih I-sêng was a man from a foreign country who painted beautiful Buddhist images. He used deep colours which he piled up in raised layers on the silk and did not leave any obscure traces. I have seen only four genuine works by him during my whole life; they are inferior to Lu Lêng-chia's paintings".

The description of the Śakyamuni picture which Berthold Laufer published in the catalogue of the C. T. Loo collection in 1924, is still of interest, particularly for its references to the material and technical peculiarities of this work, and worth quoting in part.²

The picture, which is executed on thick hemp paper (8½ × 28 in.), represents Gautama Buddha walking out of a cave or retreat amidst blossoming trees and shrubs. He carries a long stick in his right hand and wears a wide red robe with drapery in black bordered by gold lines. The folds of the

trailing robe form wavy patterns like spiralling wires.

After having expressed his admiration for the noble beauty of the manly figure – "it is not Buddha, the deified saint; it is Buddha the man" – and for the plants represented – "perhaps the mango and a tree with white flowers" – Laufer writes: "The picture is unique as to its technique also. At first sight it conveys the impression of bossing in the paper; the leaves and red fruits are represented in high relief by placing layer upon layer of thick pigments, as may be noticed in a few spots where small portions of the pigment have dropped out. It is exactly this peculiar technique which was practised by Wei-ch'ih I-sêng, of whom it is on record that he painted "plastic or high relief flowers".

I concur entirely with the above opinion, but would prefer to render the Chinese expression with the words "concave and convex", or solid-appearing, flowers. The picture makes us understand that the Chinese critic did not use this term to describe some sort of shading or *trompe l'œil* effect, but to indicate actual solid *rilievo*, produced by piling up the pigments in thick layers. This method was otherwise unknown in early Chinese painting, but curiously enough introduced again in the K'ang-hsi era by flower-painters such as Tsou I-kuei. The most remarkable thing about the picture is perhaps that it does not appear like a strange mixture of sculpture and painting, but as a perfectly harmonious work of art, naturalistically decorative and appealing in its vivid presentation of the human element of the religious motif. In this respect the picture reminds us of certain western representations

¹ Ch'ên Yung-chih was a prominent academician in the Jên-tsung reign (1023-1063) mentioned by several recorders. He "painted Buddhist and Taoist subjects, men and horses, landscapes with forests and trees. In fineness of details and in cunning effects he was well nigh unsurpassable; but in striving so hard for comprehensiveness, he lost something of purity. There are still in existence votive offerings, horse-breeding (scenes), traditional figure-subjects and the like from his hand." Soper's translation of Kuo Jo-hsi, *Experiences in Painting*, p. 50. See also Giles, *op. cit.*, pp. 113, 114.

² Cf., *T'ang, Sung and Yuan Paintings* belonging to various Chinese Collectors, described by Berthold Laufer, Paris and Brussels 1924.

of prophets or saints rather than of traditional Chinese renderings of similar motifs. It is provided with a number of seals which indicate that it formed part of the Hsüan-ho collection and later on of some other well-known collections, such as An I-chou's. It may well be one of the eight paintings listed in *Hsüan-ho hua-p'u* under Wei-ch'ih I-seng's name, four of which represented Buddha in various situations, but whatever circumstantial evidence these combinations may suggest, the main proof and importance of the picture rest on its own unique quality.

The flowers and leaves in relief, or in *ronde bosse*, form no doubt the most conspicuous technical feature of this picture, but besides this one may also notice the very sharp and tight wavy lines with which the mantle folds, the tree trunk and some grassy plants are rendered. They may be said to correspond to the definition of Wei-ch'ih I-seng's brush-work – "tight and strong like bending iron or coiling wire" – as given in *Li-tai ming-hua chi*. And it is also found in other paintings which for various reasons have been brought in connexion with the Khotanese painter.

The most characteristic among these is the horizontal scroll in the Berenson collection, which has been discussed and reproduced in an article by Aurel Stein and Laurence Binyon¹ and brought into connexion with the records about a picture called *Dancing Girls from Kutch*. The reason for this was based on the second half of the composition, which consists of two kneeling musicians, two forceful female dancers in full swing with whirling draperies, and fragments of one or two (?) standing figures, which are no longer clearly recognizable. This (latter) portion of the scroll has suffered most from the wear of time and rough handling; the figures in the other half are better preserved. There are five women brought together in a group, one of them is cuddling a small child, which attracts the attention of two by-standers, while the principal personage, an impressive lady with a diadem in her high *coiffure*, sits in splendid isolation on a low stool holding with both hands a

cup which has been filled by the servant who stands near by. The lady is an important personage, perhaps a queen or consort of a chieftain. A little further away, moving towards the middle of the scroll, are two tall girls clinging to the trunk of a tree, apparently fascinated by the scene taking place around the child, which they are observing very attentively. In spite of the rather worn state of the picture it has retained a distinct colouristic charm. The green, violet, blue and reddish tones are rich and deep; their primordial importance for the general effect of the picture was probably more marked than in any purely Chinese picture of a corresponding kind. The types, costumes and ornaments of these women are not characteristically Chinese; they are altogether more ponderous and showy, lacking something of the gracefulness so characteristic of the Chinese. The linear treatment of the folds is, indeed, emphasized in a way that causes some resemblance to coiling or spiralling wire, particularly at the lower edge of the garments, where the folds are massed into rows of ornamental spirals. This wiry style of the linear folds is so conspicuous, not to say exaggerated, that it may be taken as a signum of the painter.

Consequently we cannot but feel in the neighbourhood or under the influence of the same painter when observing it in other related pictures, such as the well-known fragment of a handscroll in the Stoclet collection in Brussels commonly described as a *Clerical Orgy* or the *Drunken Monk*.² The picture may in some respects be called a counterpart to the above-named handscroll in the Berenson collection. The proportions and measurements correspond and the designs show certain similarities,

¹ Published in the Italian review *Dedalo*, Oct. 1928. The picture is described as the work of an anonymous painter from Central Asia active in the T'ang period. Waley discusses the picture in *Chinese Painting*, p. 108, as a work closely akin to a picture by Wei-ch'ih I-seng, representing *Dancing Girls of Kutch*, which is mentioned by the thirteenth-century critic Chou Mi.

² The picture, which measures 31 × 80 cm., was reproduced in full size in colour on the occasion of the exhibition of Chinese art in Amsterdam, 1925. It was also included in the Berlin exhibition, 1929, and the London exhibition, 1934-1935. The measurements of the Berenson scroll are 30½ × 170 cm.; the scale is thus the same, though the Stoclet picture is a little shorter.

but the decorative effect of the Stoclet picture is dissimilar owing to a rather different manner of technical execution.

The reason why it has been interpreted as a representation of a clerical orgy or something similar is probably the fact that the principal figure, a plump elderly man with a long beard, is represented with tonsured head and in a state of swooning or unconsciousness. He is placed on a dais in an open tent and supported in a half-reclining position by a male and a female assistant, while a third retainer is standing close by carrying the crown-like head-gear of the man. A little further towards the background stands a woman with a baby in her arms, and in front of the dais two servants bringing food and drink in ornamented bronze vessels. The expression and demeanour of the principal figure do not indicate drunkenness; he seems rather sunk in a state of emotional exhaustion or utter grief; his eyes are closed, his limbs relaxed, and were he not supported by some of the retainers he would sink into the relief of sleep.

The intense strain of an emotion which has passed its culmination and slips then into a kind of exhaustion, is accentuated and further developed in the nine figures which form a group in front of the tent. One of them is prostrating himself before the dais; the others are milling about restlessly, some moving in one direction or another, others bending and twisting as if intoxicated by the dying rhythms of the music played on lute and drum. They may have been dancing wildly, but are now pausing, though still in a state of entrancement, or exhausted like the two men lying flat on the ground. The link between this cluster of musicians and dancers and the scene in the tent is provided by the man who is prostrating himself; he is practically hidden under his white mantle, yet he fills the gap, so to speak, and his boldly tonsured skull stands out just as clearly as that of the big man. They are all animated by the same kind of exaltation, now half suppressed or verging on sleep, yet evident all through the picture as a kind of emotional undercurrent.

The exact definition of the motif is not easy, but some help in this respect may be found in a small ink painting which I saw a few years ago in one of the Shên family collections in Hongkong. The picture was placed at the head of a long scroll of writing by Wên Chêng-ming and described as an illustration to the story about lady Wên Chi, the much beloved and esteemed wife of a Hsiung-nu chieftain, and her departure from the camp of the Mongols. The design does not correspond to later Chinese representations of this well-known motif, and it is hard to say whether the interpretation was due to the Ming painter or attached to an older original, but it must be admitted that the bereavement which forms the psychological nerve of the motif is obviously expressed in these pictures. It seems also that such complete, not to say orgiastic, abandonment to feelings of grief and joy were in better keeping with the habits of the Mongols than with those of the Chinese. The Ming drawing shows quite clearly that the scene takes place in the tent of a chieftain somewhere in the western region, and his utter despondency at the loss of a wife who was very dear to him is vividly depicted.

An exact estimate of the technical features and brush-work in this picture is hardly possible owing to its present state of preservation, but the almost wire-like fold-lines of the thin garments, which either cling very closely to the figures or reflect their excitement in spiralling or fluttering extensions, is quite marked. The emotional tension is more obvious in this picture than in the preceding one, where it is mainly concentrated in the dancing girls and the musicians. Another more palpable feature which is prominent in both pictures is the presence of the baby cuddled by a woman. It may seem insignificant, but considering the exceptional character of such a feature in Chinese painting, we are inclined to attach some importance to the baby; it may be, so to speak, a key to the significance of the motif in both cases.

The problems connected with the motifs and stylistic characteristics of these two pictures are too

complicated to be fully exposed in a few lines, but some general points may here be summarized as a result of comparative studies, which, however, remain rather hypothetical as long as the pictures cannot be examined side by side. A certain correspondence or similarity of style between the two pictures seems to us undeniable, but this depends on their derivation from originals of the same kind, or style, rather than on their actual appearances or pictorial features. This may in part be due to their more or less faulty state of preservation which has, at least in the Stoclet picture, toned down the general effect and to some extent concealed the original drawing. The linear stylization is not so distinct here as in the Berenson picture, which offers altogether a more definite idea of what we would call the original style, though apparently transmitted by a careful copyist.

The style is traceable in the Stoclet picture only as a kind of under-drawing through the soft veil of a highly accomplished pictorial execution, refined but blurred by age and dirt. This is obviously of later date than the original design; it has brought about a transformation which points towards the Sung period rather than to any earlier epoch. But, as said above, the fundamental element of style is still discernible underneath, and this is obviously un-Chinese.

The above-quoted combination of the Berenson picture with Wei-ch'ih I-sêng's painting known as the Dancers from Kutchā may or may not be correct, but it points in the right direction and is worth remembering as an acceptable hypothesis. It finds furthermore support in another better preserved picture which for centuries has been counted among Wei-ch'ih I-sêng's works.

The picture represents the Guardian of the Northern Direction; i.e. Lokapāla Vaiśravaṇa, and exists in two versions identical in design but executed at different epochs.

One of these pictures, which formerly formed part of the Tuan Fang collection, belongs now to the Freer Gallery, while the other forms part of the

Palace Museum collection. The Lokapāla is represented enthroned under a canopy like a Heavenly King. He wears a mail coat and a crown-shaped headdress and holds the pagoda (his emblem) on his right hand. On either side of the throne stands a Bodhisattva, probably Kuanyin and Vajrapāṇi, and behind them a civil and a military official. The background is dark, but there are some light cloudlets whirling around the canopy above the figures. Lower down in the picture and quite isolated from the main group, appear two kneeling musicians and a girl dancing on a round mat. The bearded man who is playing the lute has a crown of curly hair around his tonsured skull; he looks inspired, whereas the girl in tightly pleated garments and fluttering scarves is whirling in a rapturous fashion, moving her legs and body far more vehemently than any Chinese dancer might do. There can be no doubt as to the foreign origin of these figures.

The version of the picture which is now in the Freer Gallery has passed through some well-known collections in the Ming and later periods and been ascribed by prominent critics, such as Hsiang Yüan-pien, Chang Ch'ou and I Ping-shou, to Wei-ch'ih I-sêng,¹ but according to the critical notes by John E. Lodge in the Freer Gallery, it should be classified as a copy probably not executed before the Yüan period, a date corroborated by the somewhat dry and mechanical execution with uniformly sharp lines and great insistence on ornamental details and the like.

The relatively late execution of this picture becomes evident also through a comparison with the other version of the same composition belonging to the former Palace Museum collection, which is provided at the top with an inscription in gold letters containing the words: "Pin-ka-lo with all his Treasures, by Wu Tao-tzū". It is executed with colours and golden outlines on dark greenish

¹ The picture is described in detail by Chang Ch'ou in *Ch'ing-ho shu-hua fang*, vol.III and has in modern times been reproduced in *Chung-kuo ming-hua chi*, in *Oriental. Zeitschrift*, vol.I, etc. It is known under the title: "T'ien-wang under Clouds, or T'ien-wang Holding a Pagoda".

silk, in a very refined technique characteristic of early Buddhist paintings, such as sūtra-illustrations. Wu Tao-tzu's name is rather surprising in this connexion, but it may be noted that, according to Chang Ch'ou, Wu Tao-tzu used Wei-ch'ih I-sêng's "T'ien-wang" as a model for a painting of his own, a statement which may refer to the picture here under discussion. Since the other version of the same picture, as mentioned above, ever since the Yüan or early Ming period has been described as a work by Wei-ch'ih I-sêng, there can hardly be any doubt that the so-called Wu Tao-tzu version also is based on Wei-ch'ih's model. The clinching proof of the correctness of this conclusion is offered by the two kneeling musicians and the dancing girl below the throne of the T'ien-wang; they are obviously in their types, costumes, instruments and manners representatives of Central Asian rather than of Chinese art-traditions, and as the same figures also appear in the Berenson scroll, we need not add anything further about their origin. The attribution of the present picture to Wei-ch'ih may or may not be correct, but it evidently is an early painting which contains elements borrowed from Wei-ch'ih I-sêng, and it may be said to confirm our views of certain pictures which reveal such features of style as correspond to the descriptions of Wei-ch'ih I-sêng's works.

* * *

The paintings which we have described as examples of the school or manner of Wei-ch'ih I-sêng form only a minor group among the numerous Central Asian art-products in the Far East. I-sêng may well have been the most important among the artists from Khotan, Turfan or Kutchia who came to seek their fortune in China at the beginning of the T'ang period, but he was not the only one, as proved by the records previously mentioned and some of the Tun-huang paintings to which we will revert presently. No less important as evidences of the Central Asian element in Far Eastern art during the Sui and early part of the T'ang dynasty are some of the specimens of decorative art either imported from the above-named centres or – possibly to a

larger extent – made in China or Japan by artists who had been called in from the Western countries, because of their skill in certain arts.

The most extraordinary store of such works of art may today be seen in the imperial treasure-house in Nara, known as Shōsō-in, which has remained practically intact since the eighth century. We have no intention of entering here into a discussion about the origin of the numerous potteries, textiles, metal works, wood-carvings, etc. preserved in Shōsō-in, even though many of these objects could be used as illustrations of the artistic interrelations between Central Asia and the Far East, but we would like to mention two of the most important string instruments because of their painted decoration. These paintings are executed with thick pigments on the so-called *kambochi* (i.e. the leather zone covering the portion where the plectrum strikes). They represent in the one case a mountainous landscape with a group of four musicians on the back of a white elephant, and in the other case, equestrian hunters pursuing tigers in an open landscape with mountain peaks in the distance. Neither of these scenes has anything in common with Chinese art of the time, as we know it through descriptions and copies; their general characteristics are rather Indo-Persian, and one may find particularly in the drawing of the figures and the horses more likeness with Persian miniatures of later date than with Chinese paintings.

It may not be necessary here to describe these paintings more closely or to analyse in detail their features of style, it would only serve to confirm the general impression noted above and perhaps give us some idea of the element of rustic vivacity which also may be noted in some of the minor illustrative scenes in the Tun-huang wall-paintings. The painters who originated from Khotan or Kutchia or other places in Central Asia, and who had been trained according to the Western rather than the Eastern ideals, were apparently particularly esteemed in China because of their unconventional realism, which served them well as illustrators.

The T'ang Period. The Great Expansion

THE HISTORICAL events which followed after the overthrow of the Sui dynasty and which after a critical period of internal feuds led to the firm grasp of the supreme power by Li Shih-min – China's man of destiny who became the emperor T'ai-tsung (627-49) – are relatively well known and need not be retold at this place. By his remarkable personal ability as a statesman as well as a general, T'ang T'ai-tsung laid the foundation not only for a great political organization but also for a cultural development of wider scope than ever before since the Han period. His activity as a nation-builder was closely bound up with his educational and religious interests, the high value he set upon various forms of spiritual achievement. He was, to begin with, a strict Confucianist, but his attitude towards Buddhism became, as the years passed, more and more sympathetic largely owing to his friendship and reverence for the great Buddhist teacher Hsüan-tsang, who in 645 returned to Ch'ang-an after sixteen years of pilgrimage in India and whose influence in the Chinese capital attained striking proportions. But the emperor also showed benevolent tolerance towards other religions, for instance Nestorian Christianity, Zoroastrianism and Manichaeism, in accordance with his declaration that "religion has many names, there have been many wise men, and even if their teachings differ, they can be a blessing to mankind". Taoism alone was not much esteemed by the ruler, but it was allowed to remain in existence in spite of an early edict directed against it.

Through T'ai-tsung's firm and far-sighted policy the Chinese empire had become the dominating power in Asia, a position which it maintained also

under his successor the emperor Kao-tsung (650-683). Ch'ang-an became more than ever a city of international repute, where scholars, artists, tradesmen and artisans gathered from even far distant countries. The languages of Iran and Arabia, of India and Central Asia, of Japan and Korea were heard in the crowded bazaars, where foreigners in picturesque costumes mixed with the more plainly dressed Chinese merchants who, as a rule, got the better of a deal. This foreign influx acted as a stimulating impetus on the development of the spiritual as well as the material resources of the country, but it should be noted that whatever the Chinese received from foreign sources was assimilated and transmuted in accordance with well-established mental moulds, and became thus an integrating element in the sweep of creative forces which extended from Chinese centres over large parts of the Far East. This is quite evident for instance in the field of painting and sculpture which, in spite of notable influences from India and Central Asia, developed into the characteristically Chinese mature T'ang style dominant during the second half of the century not only in China proper but also in Korea and Japan. The emperor valued these arts particularly in so far as they served to embellish the new temples and palaces, but there were also painters attached to the court for the special purpose of making records of the many strange people and envoys from foreign countries who came to present their homage to the Chinese emperor, "so that future generations would be able to form some idea of the glory and magnificence of the T'ang court".

Several of the famous masters of T'ang painting started their activity in the reign of Kao-tsung, but

it was not until the beginning of the next century that the full fluorescence in this field became manifest. A period of transition followed after the death of Kao-tsung in 683, when China was ruled by the vigorous but ruthless dowager empress Wu-hou, "the Peer of Heaven", who lavished the resources of the empire on a brilliant court and splendid new temples, finding her most intimate assistants among the Buddhist monks. A political crisis was imminent at her death (705), but it was averted by the ascent to the throne of a new and brilliant personality, the young emperor Hsüan-tsung (713-756). The beginning of his reign, marked by a successful stabilization of the interior situation and a firm stand against the aggression of outward enemies, was very promising, but as years passed the flaws in his personal character became evident. Affairs of state were neglected while the emperor devoted himself to Taoist practices, luxurious entertainments, and the beauties of his inner court. With all this there was an ineffaceable romantic glow running through the reign of Hsüan-tsung, brought about by the creative forces which at that time raised art and poetry to a level of immortal glory. It may be called, *mutatis mutandis*, a Periclean age in the Far East.

It was then that the literary academy known as Han-lin was founded, an institution to which prominent painters were also admitted, while the higher musical instruction was imparted in another academy named after the Imperial Pear Orchard. The members of these institutions were by no means simply courtiers, favourites and dilettanti, but comprised such immortal geniuses as the poets Li Po and Tu Fu, a writer like Han Yü and painters like Wu Tao-tzu, Li Ssü-hsün, Wang Wei and others of the most famous masters of T'ang art. There was for a while, during the early part of the eighth century, an inflow of genius in Chinese art which lifted it, figuratively speaking, to the peaks of timeless fame.

The emperor was no doubt appreciative of the fine arts, which served him well and contributed to the aesthetic atmosphere at the court, but he lacked deeper understanding of the spiritual sources of

inspiration and tried to replace this with external arrangements and ceremonial practices in accordance with Taoist rites. As an example of this may be remembered the high tower which he caused to be constructed in the palace garden as a dwelling place for Taoist Immortals, and where some of these favoured individuals stood in the early morning hours with large bowls in their hands in which they collected the dew that was to serve as an ingredient in the elixir of life. Another Taoist adventure sponsored by the emperor was the expedition to the Isle of Bliss, composed of some young men and girls, which never returned from its search in the Eastern Sea.

The only thing beside Taoist lore which retained some influence over the ageing monarch was the irresistible charm of the beauties of the inner court. Most famous among these, and best known perhaps of all the ladies of destiny in China, was Yang Kuei-fei to whose whims and ambitions the emperor became a slave. The danger of this situation became apparent when through her intrigues with a general of Turkish descent the lock-gates were opened for interior revolts and aggressive enemies. The events that ensued have often been retold in history as well as in poetry: the tragic flight of the imperial court to far-off Szechuan, the sacrifice of the iniquitous Yang Kuei-fei to the truculent soldiers, and the plundering and burning of the abandoned capital, the first in a series of devastations by which also a great number of priceless pictures were reduced to ashes. It need hardly be added that these events had a disastrous effect on the activity of the painters and poets. Some of them managed to escape, others were forced into the service of the rebel leader. Tu Fu has recorded impressions of the situation in a poem, the burning of the imperial palaces and the massacre of the population while he and his family, "stumbling on foot . . . in mud, in mire, clung to one another". And when Li Po returned to Ch'angan after the destruction he exclaimed: "Alas, O traveller, why did you come to so fearful a place!"

These conditions did not, however, last for more

than about a year or two; the rebels were beaten back by the imperial armies under some able generals, and the new emperor, Su-tsung (756-763) who had ascended the Dragon Throne on the abdication of his father, re-entered the capital with his court. He was not particularly interested in artistic pursuits, but a certain amount of reconstruction was evidently done in the capital, though the city never regained its former importance. The rebellion had, so to say, torn away the veil of glory from the Chinese court. The inherent weakness of the imperial government had been exposed, and the emperor's word was no longer the supreme law in the Far East.

In addition the border states in the south, in the north and in the west, which for a century or more had been tributary to the Chinese government, manifested their independence by more or less warlike methods. The most aggressive among these border populations at the time were the Tibetans. A few months after the passing of the emperor Su-tsung (763) a Tibetan army of more than 200,000 men swept into China, forcing the boy emperor Tai-tsung (763-779), who now occupied the Dragon Throne, to leave the capital together with the court and seek refuge in Lo-yang. Ch'ang-an was left undefended, open to plunder and devastation, a chance of which the Tibetan army took quick and thorough advantage. Neither life nor property was spared, and everything that had been reconstructed after the first disaster fell a prey to the flames. But the Chinese had still an able military commander, general Kuo Tzū-i, who with the support of Uighur and Arab troops succeeded in driving out the Tibetans. This was, however, by no means the end of the trouble. The Tibetans returned in less than two years, and this time in company with the Uighurs, the former allies of the Chinese. Complete disaster was averted by diplomacy, but no definite peace was established. The conflict kept on in a see-saw fashion for several decades, until the Tibetans withdrew voluntarily to their wild and mountainous home country.

The House of Li, i.e. the T'ang dynasty, continued to occupy the throne until 906 in spite of repeated defeats in wars against neighbours and several dangerous interior rebellions. The representatives of the supreme power lost gradually more and more of their personal initiative and influence on the affairs of state and sought compensation in Taoist practices with the hope of obtaining powers of a more unworldly kind. We are told, however, that "the elixir of life" prepared for them by Taoist wizards was in several cases very effective in shortening the rulers' lives.

* * *

Whatever we may think of the political organization of the T'ang dynasty, and granting it did not prove strong enough to prevent a gradual decay and final dissolution of the empire, we have to admit that it led to an entirely new contact with the outside world which had a stimulating effect on the development of Chinese art and civilization. The trade relations with Western Asia flourished abundantly as long as China was considered the greatest market in the world, and in the tracks of commerce followed artistic impulses, partly transmitted by refugees from India and Iran or from minor countries in Central Asia. But, as said before, the foreign impulses were recast in Chinese moulds, and China exported its own products, especially silks and ceramics, to many foreign countries.

More important than the commercial exports were, however, the cultural, i.e. religious and artistic, influences radiating from China to the neighbouring countries, Japan, Korea, Tibet and Indo-China. Young men from these and other parts of the Far East came to China in great numbers to acquire education and skill of various kinds which they transplanted to their native countries, and this became evident in religion and political administration as well as in literature and art. The diffusion of Chinese art in Japan and Korea became thus most considerable in the seventh and eighth centuries, and hand in hand with this went the transmission of the Chinese forms of Mahāyāna Buddhism.

The transformation of Buddhism, which had been going on in China during the Six Dynasties and the Sui, continued during the first part of the T'ang dynasty and gave rise to several new schools, which became of importance for the development of religious life not only in China but also in the neighbouring countries. Hsüan-tsang, the previously mentioned great teacher, who returned from India in 645, founded the Fa-hsiang school (called Hossō in Japan). Related to this was the Hua-yen (in Japan: Kegon) school, which had a more pantheistic leaning, whereas the Lü-tsung, or Vinaya school, inculcated extremely severe monastic rules. A closer analysis of these and other Buddhist schools active at this time, such as the mystic or symbolic pantheism called Mi-chiao (Secret Doctrine), or Chên-yen (True Word), or the older schools, Ching-t'u, T'ien-t'ai and Ch'an, or Dhyāna, is not possible at this place. They all had their importance in different directions, but those which influenced art most directly were apparently the older schools in which the Amida worship had a prominent place, and gradually, also the Chên-yen.

During the earlier or expanding era of the T'ang dynasty, Buddhism had on the whole a favoured position; Kao-tsung in particular was a devoted Buddhist and so was the dowager empress Wu-hou. Hsüan-tsung once issued an edict against the building of new temples and ordered twelve thousand monks to return to secular work, but measures of this kind soon fell into oblivion and were followed by reactions in favour of Buddhism. The old-fashioned strict Confucianists were, however, never willing to accept the social regulations and principles of a monastic and mystic religion such as Buddhism, and their disapproval of the support given to it in official quarters found sometimes such scathing expression as Han Yü's famous memorandum to the throne (of the year 819), in which Buddha was characterized as a barbarian from the West with no loyalty to his father, and his kind and his teachings were severely ridiculed.

Still more dangerous, however, was the opposi-

tion of the Taoists, inspired by fear and envy of the influence of Buddhism in high quarters. The Taoists, who played on the moral weakness and superstitious inclinations of some of the emperors, did not miss any opportunity to represent Buddhism as a dangerous foreign teaching leading to political and social unrest and disloyalty. Whenever Taoism gained favour at court, Buddhism was placed under suspicion and sometimes persecuted. The most severe of these persecutions was started under the emperor Wu-tsung (841-846), who was completely dominated by his Taoist advisers. He turned against all "foreign" religions in China, directing the first stroke at the Manicheans (843) and then imposing similar bans successively on the Zoroastrians, the Christians (Nestorians) and, last but not least, on the Buddhists. The measures chosen to suppress these various religions were not simply edicts or proscriptions, but took the form of ruthless destruction and confiscation, even murder. A number of Manichean nuns were killed; the others forced to return to secular life. The same applied to the Buddhists. According to traditional records, no less than 250,000 monks and nuns were forced to seek worldly occupations, the temples and monasteries (to the number of 4600) were burnt and their property confiscated. It is possible that these traditional figures are exaggerated, but there can be no doubt that the persecution aimed at a complete extermination of these religions, and that the measures applied entailed the destruction of great quantities of religious art, wall-paintings, statues, decorative objects and scrolls, mainly produced by the leading masters during the Sui and T'ang periods. Efforts were made by the successor to the throne, Hsüan-tsung (847-859), to redress some of the wrongs done to Buddhism by revoking the edicts and by despatching the Taoist instigators to their Paradise, but the damage could not be undone, and the old schools of Buddhism had neither the spiritual vitality nor the material facilities to attain the dominating position which they had held in times of glory and expansion.

Paintings at Horyūji and Tun-huang

DURING THE early part of the T'ang dynasty as well as in the Sui period, painting in China was still to a large extent attached to the religious institutions and inspired by Buddhist ideas, a condition which no doubt facilitated the infiltration of foreign elements of style. They were imported from India and Central Asia, concomitant with the religious ideals, and they were transmitted partly by foreign painters, as previously mentioned, and partly by Chinese pilgrims who brought back reproductions of famous sculptures and paintings from the holy lands of Buddhism. The best known among these pilgrims was, as said before, "The Master of the Law", Hsüan-tsang, who on his return to China in 645 brought with him seven statues, representing some of the most famous Buddhist icons, and a great number of manuscripts. The former served, at least in part, as models for Chinese statuary in Ch'ang-an. Painted icons are not mentioned among the things brought back by Hsüan-tsang, but we are told that the Chinese artist Sung Fa-chih, who was attached to the official embassy of Wang Hsüan-ts'ê,¹ made copies of a number of famous Buddhist pictures in India. Another artist who seems to have taken part in the same embassy was Fan Ch'ang-shou,² because when later on Wang Hsüan-ts'ê's travels were published in the form of a chronicle called *Hsi-kuo chih*, this was provided with illustrations by Fan Ch'ang-shou. But beside these officially known and recorded channels of communication, there must have been many minor links or personal contacts about which nothing is known. We can here only note this general tendency or stylistic orientation of

Buddhistic painting in China at the beginning of the T'ang period, but since none of the great temple pictures in Ch'ang-an and Loyang, or elsewhere in central China remains, it is no longer possible to obtain first-hand information about Buddhist painting in China at the time. The only examples still existing are to be found in or near the borderlands of China, and to what extent they correspond to the wall-paintings which, according to Chang Yen-yüan, decorated the temples in the capitals, is more than we can tell. But since the latter in most cases were the works of prominent masters, they may indeed have been of a more advanced type than the majority of the wall-paintings at Tun-huang, which nowadays offer the main material for the study of religious paintings in the T'ang period.

Until recently there was, however, another group of such paintings, more restricted but hardly less important because of their superior artistic quality, to wit the wall-paintings in the kondo of Horyūji in Nara. These inestimable pictures, generally placed in the highest class of Far Eastern art, were partly destroyed and partly severely damaged by fire on January 26, 1949. What remain of them are mostly ghost-like shadows of a former glory beside some minor fragments of secondary figures and ornamental patterns. But since my impressions of the

¹ Wang Hsüan-ts'ê was sent in 646 by the Chinese emperor on an embassy of good will to the Indian king Kanyakubja, who however died before the envoy arrived in 655. After various warlike adventures Wang returned to China with large booty in 661.

² These Chinese artists are mentioned by Ōmura in *Chung-kuo mei-shu shih*, p. 65.

Horyūji paintings date from earlier years when they were in a fair state of preservation, though partly worn and damaged by humidity, some of the pictures are here described and reproduced as they appeared before the disastrous fire.¹

The series included four major compositions (c. 2½ × 3 metres) consisting of an enthroned Buddha surrounded by adoring bhikshus and Bodhisattvas and eight narrow panels between them, representing single Bodhisattvas. Two of the Buddha figures have given rise to some uncertainty as to their identification (partly owing to their poor conservation but also to the orientation of the building, which is not strictly in accordance with the four main quarters), while the two others can be definitely named: the Buddha on the west wall is Amitābha, represented between his two usual acolytes, Kuanyin and Ta-shih-chih, and the one on the eastern half of the north wall is Bhaishajyaguru (Yakushi), the Buddha of healing, surrounded by a larger number of Bodhisattvas and bhikshus.

The Buddha on the east wall, facing Amitābha, may be Śakyamuni, though sometimes interpreted as Ratnasambhava (Hōshō) "the Buddha of previous

birth". He is seated on a high dais and is accompanied by two standing Bodhisattvas and four monks. The fourth of the Buddha groups, which occupies the western section of the north wall, was so badly preserved already before the fire that it was hard to obtain a clear impression of all the figures; the central Buddha on the lotus throne was visible only in part and the three or four acolytes on both sides could hardly be distinguished. According to the most commonly applied scheme of arrangement, this was a Maitreya, the Buddha of the future.²

The eight Bodhisattvas who filled the tall panels between the main compositions, either standing or seated on lotus thrones, were only in a few instances definitely characterized by attributes, as for instance two different forms of Avalokiteśvara (Kuanyin), the one with eleven heads, and Samantabhadra (P'uhsien) on the elephant. His usual companion Mañjuśrī (Monju) could be recognized in one of the other Bodhisattvas, though placed on a lotus throne instead of on the habitual lion.

The best preserved of the large compositions were the Amitābha trinity and the Bhaishajyaguru group, two great works of art which in spite of fundamental

¹ The events relating to the fateful fire in Horyūji on January 26, 1949, have been extensively recorded in Japanese as well as foreign publications (see for instance *Buddhist Geijutsu*, III, 1949, and *Oriental Art*, II, 1949), and the accounts have made it evident that the disaster was caused by carelessness on the part of the painters who at the time were occupied in making full-size copies of the wall-paintings. They had left an electric heating pad attached to the current overnight, which became over-heated and started the fire. It should, however, be remembered that the judicial authorities who investigated the case did not find sufficient reason to measure out a penalty on the painters for the disaster; they were finally acquitted by the court in April 1951.

The kondō, which now (1951) is completely demolished (with the exception of the mud floor with stone plinths), was at the time of the fire in the same condition in which it had been kept during the war, i.e. reduced to an empty one-storied building under a sheet metal roof. The upper story and the high roof had been removed, and the room had been denuded of all its portable contents. The only artistic treasures still remaining were the wall-paintings, and they were destroyed or irreparably damaged, not only by the intense heat of the flames in the closed room, but also by the water which was pumped into the room mainly through a large hole that the firemen opened in one of the walls.

In order to preserve whatever remained of the plastered mud-walls and their decoration as completely as possible, it became necessary to remove them altogether. They are now kept in a

temporary storehouse covered with thick, firmly fixed rubber sheets, while the more or less scorched and burned pillars and beams are stored in another place. Relatively well preserved minor portions from the upper section of the walls were, however, at the time of my visit (in May 1951), in the studio of the painters. They served as models in the preparation of full-size cartoons of the wall-paintings (based on earlier copies and large photographs) which eventually will be transferred to the walls in a newly-erected building. On my last visit to Horyūji, in November 1954, the reconstruction of the kondō had been completed but there were no pictures on the walls.

² The iconographic problems connected with the identification of the various Buddhas and Bodhisattvas represented in the Horyūji kondō have been under discussion ever since the thirteenth century and are still not completely solved. Numerous Japanese authorities have contributed to the discussion, but it would carry us too far to give a detailed report of their ideas; it may be enough to refer to T. Naitō's publication *Horyūji Hōgō no Kenkyū* (1932), published in an English translation by W. R. Acker and B. Rowland under the title *The Wall-Paintings of Horyūji* (1943). For further information regarding later Japanese publications dealing with the same problems we may refer the reader to Alexander C. Soper's article "Recent Japanese Literature on the Horyūji Frescoes" in the *Far Eastern Quarterly*, 1949.

correspondences in style and execution, always impressed me as being the works of two distinct artists; the Amida trinity being the more harmoniously balanced and perfect work of art, though the other picture was a richer and more variegated composition. The Amitābha trinity derived its impressiveness from the air of meditative repose that characterized the Buddha as well as the two tall Bodhisattvas, and perhaps also from the fact that there was enough free space between them to make each figure stand out independently. The small adoring figures on lotus flowers placed at the sides of the canopy and of the backing of Buddha's throne hardly detracted from this impression of spaciousness. The central figure was more like a statue than like a human being, but as such, a sublime symbol of peace and equanimity. The beautiful hands placed in the mudrā of teaching (dharmachakra) were more impressive than any words. And as the two Bodhisattvas turned slightly inwards, they seemed to be listening to the teaching here expressed in symbols. Their expression was introspective, but their forms were tall and strong like those of the best T'ang sculptures. One might easily be led to suppose that the artist who executed this group was also a good sculptor.

The Buddha of healing was seated in western fashion with both feet on the ground and in his lifted right hand held the casket of medicine. On either side of him stood two Bodhisattvas, two Lokapālas (the Guardians of the World) and one adoring bhikṣu. Lower down, hardly distinguishable, stood two worshippers, while apsaras with fluttering scarves soared at the sides of the canopy. The composition was impressively hieratic though rather crowded. The very tall Bodhisattvas with embroidered dhotīs and jewelled necklaces stood partly in front of each other; of the Lokapālas and monks who were placed further back on a higher level, only the busts could be seen. Here one missed the sense of ease and repose so characteristic of the more spacious Amitābha group. The picture was more impressive through its decorative qualities and

refinement of detail than through any air of religious significance. It was the work of a great painter, hieratically lofty and beautiful, but not so austere and detached from worldly sentiments as the Amitābha group.

Similar observations may also be made on some of the single Bodhisattva figures, which were remarkable through their combination of dignity and grace. Their full and well proportioned forms were rendered in a manner which did justice to the softness of the limbs, the gracefulness of the postures and the ornamental richness of their apparel. They were fundamentally statuesque with the noble bearing of great T'ang sculptures and yet, owing to the very sensitive technical execution, attractive through their pictorial beauty.

The common designation of these wall-paintings as "frescoes" is misleading; they were not painted "al fresco", i.e. on wet plaster, but on a carefully polished dry surface. The contours and main structural lines were first fixed with India ink and, in the flesh parts, with red ochre, and this design was then gradually filled out with mineral and vegetable pigments mixed with an adherent which, however, has not proved strong enough to bind the colours safely to the plaster;¹ they have to a large extent fallen off as dry powder or faded, making the sensitive drawing plainly visible.

It may be noted that the colouring was carried out according to a method which, though not exactly corresponding to modelling in light and shade, produced an effect of plastic relief: the best among the figures stood out as full three-dimensional forms – the Buddhas recalling carved wooden statues – in other words, they were remarkable for their sculptural quality, a fact that makes us recall the praise bestowed by Chinese historians on paintings by Central Asian artists.

No definite documentary information is available regarding the origin of the Hōryūji wall-paintings.

¹ A description of the technical method employed in these paintings is given by my friend, the late Jean Bihot in his *Histoire des Arts du Japon*, I, p. 25 (Paris 1949).

their time of execution or the masters who did them, only a certain amount of circumstantial historical evidence which has been variously interpreted by a number of specialists. A full report on their opinions would carry us too far, but it should be noted that with regard to the date they are divided into two main camps, the one represented by historians who hold the opinion that the pictures were executed at the end of the seventh century, while the authorities of the other camp find it more probable that the paintings were not done until 730 or later. The first-named historians accept the date 670 for the rebuilding of the kondo after a destructive fire, and they remind us of the fact that some forty years later, i.e. in the Wado era (708-714), an outer gallery was added to the building to protect the main walls, which consisted simply of stamped earth and plaster on wooden frames. Such a measure of protection against humidity and changes of temperature would hardly have been undertaken (according to the above authorities) if the pictures had not existed and shown signs of deterioration at the time.

Some of the authorities who consider a later date more probable have tried to associate this with records about certain historical personages such as Lady Tachibana Michiyo (d.733) whose famous bronze shrine stood on the main altar of the kondo, and the monk-artist Doji who spent sixteen years in China, returned to Japan in 717, and died in 747. He is said to have "set the standards both in building-construction and form-fashioning", and to have transmitted to Japan the noble Indo-Chinese style of Buddhist art so beautifully developed in these paintings.¹

But to whatever period or master the critics may have assigned the Horyūji wall-paintings, no one has been able to deny that their fundamental character is not Japanese, nor purely Chinese, in the strictest sense of the term, but rather a combination of Far Eastern and Central Asian elements of style. In examining the main compositions we have observed their relation to some of the finest Chinese works of art of the T'ang period; they may indeed be said to

express the hieratic dignity and vigorous beauty so characteristic of T'ang art at its best, yet at the same time reveal in the treatment of the garments, the diadems and other decorative details, stylistic connexions with the religious art that flourished at some of the Buddhist centres along the pilgrim roads leading from India through Central Asia to China and *vice-versa*. It is, however, difficult, particularly in the present state of the pictures, to disentangle the various stylistic elements that may be found in them. They are, as a matter of fact, so harmoniously blended and so completely absorbed by the executive painters that the paintings give the impression of a rich and full natural outgrowth from a soil of homogeneous artistic culture. Different conclusions as to their stylistic origin may indeed be possible, and if we from a formal point of view are inclined to stress their connexion with the Buddhist art of Central Asia about the middle of the seventh century, we must at the same time admit that this had been grafted on the sturdy trunk of Chinese art which at the time was spreading its branches over large tracts of the Far East.

II

The wall-paintings executed in the Ch'ien-fo tung during the reign of the T'ang dynasty were far more numerous and varied than the painted decorations made there during earlier periods. The period was long, comprehending almost three centuries, and offered almost endless opportunities for religious painting because Buddhism reached some of its high-water marks in China during these centuries. Conditions were thus most favourable for an increasing artistic activity at Tun-huang; it was only towards the end of the period that it began to ebb out when the Chinese lost their political hold on this part of the country.

In order to establish a more convenient general survey of the rich artistic material of the T'ang period in the Ch'ien-fo tung, the Tun-huang

¹ Cf. Alexander C. Soper's article "Recent Japanese Literature on the Horyūji Frescoes" in the *Far Eastern Quarterly*, 1949.

Institute (as well as some independent Chinese historians) have proposed to divide the paintings into four groups, or successive stages, which roughly mark their chronology and the stylistic development. These should, according to the Institute, be dated as follows: the first, called "the beginning", 618-712; the second, called "the apex", 713-765; the third, called "the middle", 766-820; and the fourth, called "the end", 821-860.

Another way of dating the four periods which perhaps accords more directly with the historical events, was proposed in 1949 by one of Chang Ta-ch'ien's students; the first 618-684, *i.e.* to the end of the Kao-tsung reign; the second 685-741, Wu-hou's and the major part of Hsüan-tsung's reign, *i.e.* the period of brilliant cultural development; the third 746-755, a period of political havoc and reversions; the fourth 756-860, comprising attempts at a restoration of the imperial power, gradual decline and the loss of Tun-huang to the Tibetans. During the years when the Tibetans occupied the Tun-huang oasis no artistic work of importance seems to have been accomplished there, but later on, under the Liang and the early part of the Sung dynasty, the activity at Tun-huang was resumed with considerable fervour and success, particularly on the incentive of some members of the Chang and Ts'ao families who resided there as almost independent governors.

All these different periods are represented by a certain number of wall-paintings, some of them with dated inscriptions, but the greatest number belong to the first period. It comprises over forty caves, and at least two of these are dated, *i.e.* in accordance with the years 618-26 and 686. Other dates of the later periods are: 742, 746-55, 760, 776, 860 and possibly a few more, all of which are useful evidence for the classification of the rest of the material, which may in part be dated by comparison. But it need hardly be pointed out that a thorough classification of nearly a hundred caves is quite impossible without a sufficient number of photographic reproductions. We can here only direct

attention to a few of them and describe some typical examples among the wall-paintings.

The pictorial decoration in most of the cave chapels of the T'ang period includes at least one large Paradise composition (sometimes two or more) and beside these a number of minor illustrative paintings arranged in borders at the side of the Paradises or in separate sections on the side walls. The former, which cover very large spaces, are a kind of symbolic pictorial transposition of visionary descriptions given in certain Mahāyāna scriptures of Amitābha's or Śakyamuni's abodes for the Blessed, whereas the latter are illustrations to Jātaka tales or popular stories relating to the lives of the Bodhisattvas. The Paradise compositions are thus from a formal viewpoint abstract constructions usually consisting of an architectural framework and a great number of blessed beings placed within it grouped in tiers and sections around a large central Divinity in human shape. Their decorative effect depends on the balancing, in design and colour, of the large masses of rather uniform figures, be they Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, guardians, musicians, apsaras or human souls, which occupy the various compartments of the huge celestial pavilions that rise on slender poles from the lotus lakes. The general type or pattern of these compositions was no doubt imported with the Mahāyāna scriptures from Central Asia, but it could be enlarged, developed or reduced according to the space available and the ideas of the leading artist. The actual work was probably performed by a whole staff of painters specializing in various details or standard elements of these mammoth compositions. The formulae of these pictures were certainly no inventions of the painters who executed them in the Ch'ien-fo tung; they had been developed at the Buddhist centres further west in conjunction with the spreading of the Mahāyāna teachings about spiritual realms to be reached or visioned through proper study and meditation. The painters who were engaged in executing these paintings may not always have understood their far-reaching import, but they

worked according to a programme which retained elements of hierarchical exaltation that makes the pictures impressive even when they are not great works of art in the proper sense of these words.

One of the most complete and best preserved representations of Amitābha's Paradise is the picture in Cave 172 (P.118 C) which, as it also exists in a colour reproduction, may serve as an example of this kind of hieratic composition (Pl.56). The copy of it exhibited in Peking (1954) was distinguished by a rather light colouring dominated by the greenish-blue tone of the background and the lacquer-red of the wooden frames, from which the soft brown of the figures easily detached themselves. The decorative effect was quite cool and harmonious, but rather indifferent. It made one realize that pictures of this type can be appreciated only when seen in the dim light of some cave chapel, where age and incense have contributed to give them something of the mysterious atmosphere of intangible visions. In the clear light of a naked hall they appear to the untrained eye rather boringly elaborate, like intricate ceremonies performed with minute exactitude, but without the least emotional appeal or indication of a spiritual significance.

In Cave 217 (P.70), one of the largest and most important chapels from the second T'ang group, are no less than three Paradise paintings, i.e. Amitābha's on the west, Bhaishajyaguru's on the east and Śakyamuni's on the south wall. The simplest of these Paradises is the last-named. Śakyamuni is placed on a high dais; he is accompanied by a dozen noble Bodhisattvas, some at his side, and some below. There is no lotus-lake, no architectural framework, only three decorative canopies suspended over the figures. At the upper edge, on the clouds, may be distinguished some indications of a heavenly region with pavilions and gateways (Pl.57).

The Paradises of Amitābha and Bhaishajyaguru are more elaborate and not always easy to distinguish from each other. Their main figures are placed (as in

the previous example) in symmetrical groups on stepped and balustraded terraces, divided by canals or rising from the lotus-lake, while the uppermost region is filled with pavilions, gateways and towers, which form a sort of crowning decoration to the whole scene. These elements may be observed in the picture on the right wall of this cave, which is exceedingly complicated (Pls.57A and 58) with a great number of successive stages and figures in various grades and dimensions crowded together on the terraces. The architectural stage is geometrically constructed in two identical halves on both sides of the central axis, which runs through the main Buddha. The horizontal lines lead in ascending angles towards this central axis; those which are higher up in the picture do it with a less rising angle than those which are lower down. Only the top-stories and the roofs of the high pavilions in the background are presented as seen from below with lines inclining downward. The figures which are placed on this elaborate stage are of two or three different degrees, depending on their importance; each has its own point of vision and there is no strictly formal connexion between them and the architecture (Pl.58A).

The strips of illustrations framing the Paradise pictures in the cave here under discussion are not only entertaining by virtue of their contents, but also in some instances pictorially interesting. They offered more freedom for the creative imagination of the painters. Two of the side panels (Pls.59 and 59A) present a number of illustrations to Śakyamuni's preaching about the various misfortunes that may befall human beings. We see a man falling into a great fire; a ship in a storm; a little man attacked by evil beings, another by robbers, and by wild beasts, etc.; while the good ones are represented kneeling or seated before the Buddha or other teachers who explain that if the believer places himself under the protection of Kuanyin, the burning pit becomes a cool pond, the dragons of the sea will not devour him, the waves are calmed, the sword which was to cut short his life, breaks; the

prisoner is released from his bonds, and so on.¹

All these and the other figure groups of a corresponding kind are placed in successive layers marked off by sloping ridges, while a certain amount of vertical division is obtained by the introduction of dark strips or tablets of various sizes. The sloping ridges or hills are essentially akin to those which we observed in the earlier narrative landscapes, though less complete or definite. They run mostly diagonally across the picture and leave sufficiently large openings between the successive layers or compartments to produce an impression of something more like a unified landscape than of isolated space units.

The tendency to treat the landscape as a continuous pictorial stage on which a number of successive incidents take place, becomes more evident in the broad framing strips below and on the right side of the Paradise picture. The division into compartments is here greatly modified or is abandoned. (Pl.60). There are large stretches of open country or views of high mountains divided by narrow gorges. The former style of landscape is rather bare and desolate with its dry trees and narrow streams, forming thus an appropriate stage to the small figure groups in which the misfortunes and trials of human life are depicted in accordance with Buddha's words. The mountain landscape is still more impressive owing to the split and folded peaks which rise in the distance. From these the uneven ground seems to be sloping downwards with incidental humps and hollows. The whole thing is drawn as from an elevated and shifting point of vision, which makes it possible for the painter to spread out the scenery and depict all the small human figures with equal distinctness quite independently of their situation. Some are emerging from a far away gorge, others riding on muleback up the slope, or on horses down below. The various situations blend naturally with the forms of the landscape and the very small figures contribute by contrast to the air of austere grandeur which sweeps over the composition. Considering the scarcity of

authentic landscape paintings from the middle of the eighth century, even minor things of this kind acquire a certain historical interest.

When a single incident is represented within a somewhat larger space the illustration becomes more like a complete picture (Pl.61). This may be observed in the representation of the Fight for Buddha's Relics before the city of Kushinagara, where these precious objects were kept. The picture is reduced to a few essential elements, represented with great clearness and coordinated into a rather expressionistic design: The city, represented by a pavilion and high walls with corner-towers, occupies most of the upper part of the picture. Around it spreads a drab desert-like plain and in front of it are two rows of soldiers in armour, attacking with long spears and seeking shelter behind large shields, *i.e.* the armies of Magadha and Kushinagara. There are, furthermore, two groups of important people, one of which is headed by the governor on horseback, who is meeting supplicants; the other by a man in kingly attire leading a procession. The linear orientation of the composition is oblique, or isometric; the rows of soldiers form continuations to the city walls, while the procession at the lower edge proceeds at right-angles to this direction, marking an opposite diagonal. As this emphasis on the parallel diagonal lines is combined with an elevated point of vision the effect of extension towards the background is brought out effectively, and the whole thing presents itself as a well-unified decorative composition with a few distinct details as seen from a great height.

Another illustration in this cave of the same mode of composition represents a two-storied pagoda and some monks who seem to keep guard around this building, which may contain some Buddha relics or other precious objects. The pictorial rendering of the building is impressively accurate, as may be seen in our Plate 60A.

¹ The pictures are inspired by a section of the *Saddharma pūṇḍarikā sūtra* which is devoted to the praise of Kuanyin as a protector against various calamities.

The paintings in this cave, which exhibit considerable variations in style and execution, must have been the work of several artists active about the middle of the eighth century, but the reproductions at our disposal are hardly sufficient for a closer characterization of the individual manners, nor is it possible for us to say anything about the colouring, which no doubt (to judge by a few specimens mentioned before) was more brilliant than the plates would lead us to expect. The painters were apparently animated not only by the endeavour to give clear and appealing illustrations of certain incidents in the sacred legends, but also by an endeavour to release the spiritual significance of the motifs in a decorative form (Pl.62).

The minor illustrative paintings which, as we have seen, may be arranged in framing borders or in wing-like side compartments to the Paradise compositions, offer indeed the greatest attraction to Western amateurs. They contain, so to speak, the human transcriptions of the Buddhist path of salvation which, if properly understood, may lead the devotee to the state of supreme bliss foreshadowed in the representations of superhuman worlds or regions. Some of these small pictures take us right into the life of the people; whether illustrating miraculous events or pilgrims travelling on horseback or in boats, or such necessary occupations as hunting, ploughing or thrashing corn, they are based on actual observation and placed in natural surroundings suggestive of the desert country beyond Tun-huang or the barren rocky shores of the confluents of the Huangho. Anyone familiar with some bits of this north-western country will recognize the painters' source of inspiration, but must at the same time admit that the natural motifs have been absorbed and transformed with remarkable understanding of the special requirements of mural decorations. This can be best appreciated in colour reproductions in which the contrasting tones serve to emphasize the structure of the motifs, but the fundamental note of grandeur so characteristic of some of these small landscapes may also be observed

in monochrome reproductions. The human element is in these pictures completely blended with the landscape but nevertheless intensely expressive, as may be seen in the pictures in Cave 323 (P.139 A) representing some monks travelling in small boats along a wide river (Pls.62, 63).

Interest in human psychology is certainly not lacking among these painters; most of the pictures contain incidents or situations in which the action or intention is vividly brought out by the momentary movements, even though the facial expressions of the figures are not visible. This can also be observed in the fragment in the Fogg Museum (from Cave 325, P.140) which represents a group of three men one of whom is lifting an axe aiming a deadly blow at the monk in front of him. The figures are not simplified symbols in outlines, but perfectly realized human beings, convincing in structure and movement, carefully modelled without too much insistence on detail and expressive of an intense animation. We feel the tension in the slim man with the raised axe, the cowardly slyness of the companion who is sneaking behind his back, and the calm composure of the man who in a moment will have his skull fractured. There are few Chinese pictures known to us which could be said to match this in concentrated dramatic appeal. One cannot but ask: should it be taken as an adumbration of the general level and quality of early T'ang painting in China, or should its superior qualities of form and movement be explained as results of closer relations with more westernized centres of art? However this may have been, it cannot be denied that some of the painters who were occupied in the Ch'ien-fo tung in the seventh and first half of the eighth century were masters of a high class who still remain to be properly classified and appreciated. It will then also become evident whether their relations to certain forms of western art were more important from a stylistic viewpoint than their fundamental coalescence with Far Eastern painting.

Among the wall-paintings in the Ch'ien-fo tung are also a few in which hieratic and naturalistic

elements have been combined, such as for instance the illustrations of Mañjuśrī's visit to the decrepit old philosopher Vimalakīrti. At least five of these are known in reproductions; the motif was a favourite one in Chinese painting during the T'ang period, probably because Vimalakīrti is supposed to have visited China. According to the legend he was a native of Vaiśālī who lived at the time of Śākyamuni, but there is no historical evidence for his existence, and the sūtra named after him is considered apocryphal. But this legendary old hermit-philosopher became to the Chinese a kind of symbol or ideal of spotless purity and profound wisdom, highly venerated and often represented not only in wall-paintings at Tun-huang but also in minor quasi-profane pictures by masters of the T'ang and Sung periods, such as Wang Wei and Li Lung-mien.

In the above-mentioned wall-paintings Vimalakīrti and Mañjuśrī are as a rule represented in two equal opposite groups. At the request of Śākyamuni the Bodhisattva came to visit the old man while he was ill, and as they were both deeply versed in philosophical conundrums, they started a colloquy which attracted a great crowd of auditors from celestial as well as terrestrial regions eager to profit by the words of these two paradigms of wisdom. We are also told that on this occasion Vimalakīrti manifested his supernal powers by having a bowl of rice brought thither by a Bodhisattva which proved enough to feed the whole crowd.

The usual way of representing this, as may be seen also in the Tun-huang wall-paintings, was to place the principal figures on elevated platforms or terraces seated under canopies while the auditors, *i.e.* Bodhisattvas, devas, disciples and men of various ranks and nationalities, were grouped at the foot of these elevated seats of honour. The differences in the various representations of this motif in Ch'ien-fo tung consist less in any important modifications of the principal figures than in the composition and characterization of the audiences. The reproductions at our disposal are not sufficient to allow a detailed description, but I would like to draw attention to the

painting in Cave 335 (P.149) which (as may be seen in Pl.65) is distinguished by a remarkably vivid characterization of the two main figures as well as of the attendant Bodhisattvas and the human auditors.

The exceptional artistic importance of some of these Vimalakīrti scenes was strongly brought home to me at the exhibition of copies in Peking, which included a full-size lately finished copy of a large portion of a wall-painting in Cave 220 (P.264) which had for a long time remained hidden under dirt and repainting. It is dated by inscription in the year 642. A general idea about the picture in its present rather faded condition may be obtained from Pl.64. It shows the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī seated cross-legged on a high platform and below this the procession of dignified officials and fan-carriers led by an imposing potentate – presumably a king – magnificently attired in an embroidered robe and with all the calm composure in movements and expression that only the great Chinese masters could impart to their heavenly rulers. The figure reminded me involuntarily of some of the emperors portrayed in Yen Li-pên's famous scroll; it was filled with something of the same spirit, the same ponderous dignity proper to the heavenly ruler, and still more obviously expressed in almost life-size with perfect mastery of the pictorial form. It was only a copy but evidently executed with great care and keen feeling for the pictorial quality of the original; it conveyed the impression of faded colouring, the predominating tones were green and brown, but they were toned down by age or slightly veiled as if seen in the dim light of a cave chapel.¹

The picture was to me an interesting historical document as it offered obvious points of comparison with some better-known paintings of the same period such as Yen Li-pên's emperors. All the members of this group, high officials, servants and disciples, reverently approaching the divine being, brought home to me the realization that here was a

¹ No reproduction of this copy was available. The reconstructive drawing of the king and his retainers reproduced in Pl.64A is lacking in quality and significance.

higher level of figure-painting on a monumental scale than may be seen in the few fragments of T'ang painting scattered elsewhere in the world. They made me recall the important lists of wall-paintings in the Buddhist temples in Ch'ang-an and Loyang published in *Li-tai ming-hua chi*, including some of the irretrievable masterpieces by Yen Li-pên, Wu Tao-tzû, Wang Wei and others, which, according to the Chinese chroniclers served as sources of inspiration for subsequent generations of Chinese painters. The historical importance of the best Tun-huang paintings from the beginning of the T'ang period can hardly be exaggerated. Even in their fragmentary condition they transmit a spiritual animation and pictorial effulgence seldom if ever found in later paintings of the same order. This may also be observed in some other lately uncovered wall-paintings in the same cave, representing Bodhisattvas and Dancing Girls, which are reproduced in Pls. Add.64B and C.

The paintings which have occupied us in the preceding pages were all executed during the first and second of the afore-mentioned sub-periods of the T'ang dynasty, i.e. between the beginning of the seventh and the middle of the eighth centuries, corresponding to what has been called the "beginning" and the "apex" of T'ang art at Tun-huang. But the pictorial decoration of the cave chapels did not cease with that; it was carried on (though with considerable intermissions) during several centuries down into the Yüan period (and occasionally also in the nineteenth century). The quantity of religious painting produced there in later ages was very large, but the quality was uneven, to say the least, and never reached a level comparable to that of the earlier paintings. We have no opportunity here to enter into a discussion of this later material, but a few words about the general course of events and the ensuing artistic production may be necessary to complete this outline of the Tun-huang mural paintings.

The historical events which brought about a radical change in local conditions at Tun-huang were produced by the weakening of the imperial

hold on the north-western border country and the attacks of the Tibetans, who finally in 760 succeeded in establishing themselves as masters of the oasis. They remained there until 848, when they were driven out with the help of the Uighurs, who apparently settled in Tun-huang in increasing numbers, found the oasis attractive and took possession of it (873). They stayed on as nominal rulers of the place for about a hundred years, but seem to have been on good terms with the local population and ruled the country mainly through Chinese officials.

During the first decades of the Tibetan occupation the artistic activity at the Ch'ien-fo tung seems still to have been carried on, if we may judge by the dated inscriptions and the decorations in some of these caves. The dates reported from this period refer to the years 745-755, 760 and 776 and possibly a few more years, but there is none from the ninth century before the arrival of the Uighurs. The distinguishing features of the Paradise compositions of this time are Indo-Tibetan. The designs become more rigidly geometric, the carefully balanced and calculated framework becomes more important or prominent than ever, and the Indianized Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are subjected to strictly applied principles of construction. It may be advocated from a formal point of view that these Indo-Tibetan Paradise paintings mark a further stage in the evolution of religious painting, because the architectural and figurative elements are more firmly joined and the decorative unity more marked, but it must at the same time be admitted that when the pictures take on the appearance of masterly expositions of geometric skill, they lose the appeal of exalted visions. A highly accomplished example of this change is the Paradise composition in Cave 321 (P.139 A), the main portion of which is built up from a fixed point of view which is on the level of the heart of the central Buddha. It may be said that the whole thing is a kind of radiation from this point; the upper portions of the picture being thus rendered as seen from below, while the terraces and

lower portions are seen from above and extend far into the foreground. The spatial construction may be the result of an effort to represent the Paradise as a radiation from the Buddhist centre or as a vision leading up to it (Fig. A).

When the Uighurs became the masters of Tun-huang (c.873) the situation changed again in favour of an increasing artistic activity. Several important caves seem to have been decorated at the end of the ninth and during the following century. They contain elaborate paintings and as a rule also long rows of donors, easily recognized as foreigners by their plump figures, their costumes and the hair ornaments of the women, who now appear in great numbers in prominent places. They are sometimes characterized with a kind of naïve realism which makes them more interesting than the hieratic compositions made at their command. They are more crowded than ever and painted in a fluent manner which gives them more likeness to decorative wall-hangings than to the earlier renderings of similar motifs. Compared with the works of the Chinese painters from the beginning of the eighth century, they appear not only superficial but strangely foreign and may thus, in every sense of the word, be said to carry us to the very borderland of Chinese painting.

Artists of various nationalities and training must have been employed at Tun-huang at this period. The oasis and neighbouring country formed a kind of independent province or dukedom protected by the Uighurs, but actually ruled by governors of the Chang and Ts'ao families who resided here between 850 and 1035, as appears from several inscriptions in the caves. The cave chapels founded by Chang I-ch'ao and members of his family are among the largest and best preserved at the Ch'ien-fō tung and the pictures in at least two of them (156, P.17b and P.104) contain vivid representations of the governor's inspection tours in the province with a great display of military pomp, and the festival receptions with dancers, musicians and acrobats arranged in his honour. They have no connexion with the religious

character of the place and may be taken as indication that Tun-huang now, at the end of the T'ang period, and during the Five Dynasties had regained some prosperity, though of a more worldly kind than in the days of religious fervour; "a final burst of splendour before the tides of empire and trade receded, leaving Tun-huang far from the main routes", to quote Irene Vincent. The artistic activity at the place was not exhausted but it was led into other channels.

* * *

The pictures on silk and canvas from Tun-huang form an important supplement to the mural paintings, and they have become well known through the large collections brought to London (now partly in Delhi) and Paris (Musée Guimet) by Aurel Stein and Paul Pelliot respectively. A fair number of the pictures of the Stein collection have furthermore been made accessible in excellent reproductions, partly in colour.¹

The artistic standard of these pictures is rather uneven. Most of them are not original creations, but free copies, if not tracings of standard models. The earliest actually dated specimen in the Stein collection is of the year 864 (in the Pelliot collection is a fragment dated 729), the latest 983, but the designs are in many instances a hundred or two hundred years earlier than the actual paintings, which mostly seem to date from the time of the Tibetan occupation of Tun-huang, when the artistic activity at this place was declining. But owing to the fact that they represent earlier iconographic models, they retain considerable historical interest; the best of them reveal elements of the spiritual import and hieratic beauty which characterized Buddhist painting of the early T'ang period.

In most cases the designs perpetuate Indian or Central Asiatic prototypes, which do not seem to have penetrated further into Chinese art, but beside such pictures there are others of a more naturalistic

¹ Stein, *Serindia*, vol. IV, PLLVI-XCIV, and *The Thousand Buddhas*, with an Introductory Essay by Laurence Binyon. London 1921.

kind based on actual observation rather than on foreign patterns. They form series of popular illustrations which (as seen also in the wall-paintings) served as borders or side-wings to the large compositions. The best among them should be borne in mind as valuable additions to the scanty store of original paintings of the T'ang period.

The close parallels between the murals in the Ch'ien-fo tung and these pictures on hemp cloth, silk or paper include their subjects too. They consist, as we have seen, mainly of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas assembled in or around the lotus-lakes of certain Paradises or abodes of the respective Buddhas. The frequency of this motif is most striking, whereas the more ordinary Buddhist subjects, trinities or single figures, are less prominent at this place.

In the Introduction to his *Catalogue of the Paintings Recovered from Tun Huang* (1931) Arthur Waley has pointed out that the Buddhism of Tun-huang, as reflected in the paintings and manuscripts, is compounded in particular of two elements, the cult of the Paradises, and the *dhāraṇī* cults. The first-named is certainly evident in the paintings, but the *dhāraṇīs* may hold a more important place in the writings. They consist of magic formulae, the use of spells, etc., for mastering the secret forces of nature and man, and they were of particular importance as means of propaganda, because they "brought Buddhist practice into line with pagan folklore".

The Paradise pictures, on the other hand, may have been results of psycho-spiritual practices. When the Dhyāna masters were meditating on various Buddhas of the past, they were instructed to see these beings in a surrounding or atmosphere of spiritual splendour, i.e. in the supreme spiritual ecstasy in which the Buddhas dwelled and which the Dhyāna masters were trying to reach through meditation. There are some well-known sūtras of the fifth and sixth centuries devoted to the discussion of the Paradises. They make us realize that various forms of meditative Buddhism existed long before the so-called Ch'an school became of leading

importance in the spiritual life and culture of China. The teaching inculcating meditation on the celestial Buddhas was regarded as fundamental and in connexion with it, or inspired by "the meditation on the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, there grew up a whole art of illustration abundantly exemplified in the Paradise paintings of the Stein Collection. Such paintings were conceived in the first place as pious records of the Dhyāna visions, but also as aids to aftercomers in the attainment of similar visions."¹

The Paradise pictures do not simply represent the Pure Land of the West, i.e. Amitābha's Paradise, but also other corresponding abodes of the Blessed, situated in the other main quarters of the world, viz. Bhaishajyaguru's Paradise in the east, Śākyamuni's Paradise in the south, and Maitreya's Paradise in the north. But these various "heavens" are not very clearly distinguished, the compositional arrangements are practically the same in them all, consisting of an architectural framework of platforms and verandas rising stepwise from lotus-lakes in front of temple façades or two-storied pavilions of a very elaborate type. The Buddha, ruler over the Paradise, accompanied by two or more Bodhisattvas, is enthroned on the highest platform; below him, on the second platform, are the musicians seated in two rows, and between them the dancing apsara whose expressive movements mark the rhythm of the music. Beyond them on side platforms at various levels are (in the larger pictures) hosts of other celestial beings, arranged according to rank and degree in the cosmic hierarchies. (Cf. Pls. I, II, VI, VIII in *The Thousand Buddhas*.) To quote the beautiful words of Laurence Binyon, we are "taken into an atmosphere of strange peace, which yet seems filled with buoyant motion and with floating strains of music".²

Such features in these various representations enable us to tell whether a picture refers to Amitābha's, Bhaishajyaguru's, Śākyamuni's, or Maitreya's Paradise, may be found in the mudras and attributes

¹ Waley, *A Catalogue*, etc. Introduction, pp. XII, XIII.

² In the Introductory Essay to *The Thousand Buddhas*.

of the main Buddhas, but they are not always very distinct. In other instances some help in this respect may be found in the accompanying Bodhisattvas. Amitābha Buddha is usually accompanied by Avalokiteśvara (Kuan-yin) and Mahāstānaprāpta (Ta Shih-chih), Śākyamuni has Mañjuśrī (Wēn-shu) and Samantabhadra (P'u-hsien) at his sides; Bhaisayaguru is accompanied by Suryaprabha and Candraprabha (the Sun and the Moon) beside the twelve Yaksha warriors, while Maitreya is guarded by two Lokapālas and Bodhisattvas of less definite types. The Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are evidently derived from Indian prototypes, but the Chinese gradually took certain liberties in their interpretation of the models, or misunderstood them, as they fitted them to their own modes of thinking and temperament. This relatively independent interpretation of traditional motifs has found the most interesting expression in the minor illustrative scenes, usually placed at the sides of the main composition. They take us, so to speak, into the life or legend of the main Buddha, who thus becomes a living example. The scenes from the early life of Śākyamuni, or Prince Siddhārta, are represented with a touch of human intimacy and feeling for the relation between nature and man which makes them appealing: The prince takes farewell of his faithful horse Kanthaka and his groom Chandaka before leaving for the solitude of the wilderness; the King's messengers are searching for him in vain in the mountains; he cuts his hair and abandons the three companions, and finds himself finally quite alone meditating in the wilderness. The stories are simply told and the scenes reduced to as few elements as possible, but there is a perfect interplay or balance between the figures and the hills and trees, in colour as well as in design, which makes some of these small pictures quite significant works of art. They have a tone of deep solitude which reflects the human import of the motifs (Pls. 68 and 70, upper).

In some other small pictures which illustrate the so-called Simultaneous Births – i.e. the births which took place in the animal kingdom at the same time

as that of Śākyamuni – the artists have shown their skill in depicting certain domestic animals – a sheep suckling a lamb, a cow licking the head of her calf (while she is being milked by a woman), and a mare suckling its foal (the future Kanthaka). The animals are placed against green hills with a few flowering plants and painted in light colours, but the characterization of the species depends mainly on the sensitive drawing. The white sheep is soft and woolly, the cow sinewy and bony, and stands with arched back waiting to be milked (Pl. 69).

A more finished performance is the small fragment on paper (in the Pelliot collection in the Musée Guimet) which represents a high official on horseback followed by his squire, who carries a lance. The men are apparently watching some situation in front of them; keeping still, but ready to move at a moment. The background opens into a landscape suggested by a few trees growing on the hillside. It reveals the hand of a master who may have had in mind some larger mural painting when he composed this illustration, which in spite of its small dimension is very impressive (Pl. 79, lower).

Very few, if any, of the single Bodhisattva figures, or other minor pictures, reach the standard of decorative beauty and celestial glamour characteristic of the best among the Paradises (as for instance the Bhaishajyaguru Paradise, reproduced on Pls. I, II in *The Thousand Buddhas*), but there are nevertheless one or two that should be pointed out in particular. Foremost among them is the very attractive picture which represents Tejaprabha Buddha as Subduer of the Five Planets. He is represented seated on a high two-wheeled cart, drawn by a white bullock, advancing over the clouds. Around the cart are grouped five genii, some of rather strange appearance, who represent the planets: the scantily clad dark-skinned man leading the bullock of the cart represents Saturn; the stately figure in a wide mantle with a boar's head in his head-dress, who is standing on the clouds above the bullock, is Jupiter; the figure at his side (male or female?) with a monkey in the head-dress, is Mercury, the recorder, who carries

a writing-brush and a tablet; the lady in white playing on the p'i-p'a, and walking in front of the cart is Venus, whose head-dress is crowned by a cock; after her, behind the cart, follows a four-armed red demon warrior, carrying sword, arrow and spear, i.e. the spirit of Mars.

The picture is dated by inscription in the year 897, but, as has been pointed out by various writers, the style of it bespeaks an earlier origin. Laurence Binyon found in it elements of style reminding him of the Ku K'ai-chih scroll in the British Museum. This may be far-fetched, but there is no doubt that the picture was inspired by the work of some prominent early painter. It should be recalled that such pictures representing the rulers of the planets are mentioned among the works of Chang Sêng-yu and Yen Li-pên and other early masters. The characterization of the planetary rulers by costumes

and attributes are practically the same as in Chang Sêng-yu's afore-mentioned scroll which, however, has no relation to Buddhist art. Waley points out that the cult of Buddha as a kind of super-planet started in China in the seventh century and that it became more popular in the eighth century, when Amoghavajra (705-74) made an abridged Chinese version of the sūtra "which may for convenience be called the Tejaprabha Sūtra". Reasons of style make it also probable that the picture is a close reproduction of an original design of the eighth century. It is as such a precious relic of Chinese painting from the golden age of religious art in the Far East, combining as it does in its motif the universal, not to say cosmic, background of Mahāyāna philosophy with the veneration of the last human Buddha, and revealing in its pictorial symbols traces of a great artistic tradition.

The Great Traditional Masters

I

Yen Li-pên

THE GREAT masters of the T'ang period have probably exercised a more potent influence on the development of Chinese painting than any later artists, but it is nowadays difficult, if not impossible, fully to appreciate the scope and sweep of it. It becomes to some extent evident from the historical traditions transmitted in the literary records of successive generations, but the actual pictures still preserved are much too few and uncertain to serve as a basis for a critical appreciation of the various masters. As a matter of fact, with very rare exceptions, they are copies or free transpositions of the old masters' compositions, sometimes interesting as historical testimonies of the far reaching influence of these painters, but of little value as expressions of their individual styles and temperaments. Yet, in spite of the fact that original pictures of the T'ang dynasty are exceedingly rare, it may be said that the great masters of this period still survive as artistic personalities. Their lives have been extensively recorded and their works so vividly described by Chang Yen-yüan and other early historians, that they appear to us with a certain amount of personal reality or individual characteristics on the long scroll of Chinese art-history. The literary material is, as a matter of fact, in some cases so rich and interesting that it would deserve a much fuller treatment than we can accord to it in this outline of early Chinese painting; it is only presented here in short extracts in so far as they contribute to the characterization of the leading masters. It seemed preferable to concentrate the discussion around a few of these than to include a mass of information about minor artists

whose names cannot be connected with any existing paintings, whether copies or originals.

* * *

The oldest among the men of the first rank was Yen Li-pên. He was probably born at the end of the sixth century in the reign of the first Sui emperor, i.e. at a time when his father Yen P'i was active as a painter of considerable renown in the capital.¹ Through his father and his elder brother, Li-tê, he was, so to say, initiated into the secrets of painting, but his special models among the older masters were Chang Sêng-yu and Chêng Fa-shih. His brother Li-tê was active almost from the beginning of the T'ang dynasty in the service of the court; about the middle of the Wu-tê era (618-626) he was appointed as an official of the *Shang-i* (the Office of Imperial Garments and Utensils) and thus became responsible for the designs of various kinds of ceremonial robes as well as for carriages, umbrellas, hats, fans and the like. At the beginning of the Chên-kuan era (627-649), he was made Master of Works, and as he supervised the building of the new imperial palaces to the satisfaction of the emperor, he was promoted to the presidency of the *Kung-pu* (the Board of Works) and made a duke. He died in 656 and was honoured with posthumous promotions and the name K'ang (Peace).

Two or three pictures of his are mentioned by Chang Yen-yüan, but to judge from the *curriculum vitae* noted above, he was all through more occupied

¹ The most complete biographical information about Yen Li-tê and Yen Li-pên is given in *Li-tai ming-hua chi*, Chapter IX.

with practical duties and applied designs than with any kind of picture making (in the ordinary sense of the word), which is worth noticing as an indication of the close connexion then existing between painters and men of certain trades, i.e. between artists and artisans.

Yên Li-pên followed, to begin with, in the footsteps of the elder brother and seems also to have co-operated with him in executing certain wall-paintings in the Tz'ü-ên temple in Ch'ang-an, but his artistic genius was apparently more pronounced than that of Li-tê and remained the dominant element in him throughout his life, in spite of the fact that he also was promoted to important posts in the government service. If we may trust the somewhat vague account in *Ming-hua chi*, Li-pên was in the service of the future emperor T'ai-tsung while he was still Prince of Ch'in, and in the ninth year of Wu-tê (626) he received an order to make a picture of the eighteen scholars who gathered in the Ch'in palace in 621.¹ Ch'u Liang wrote a eulogy to the picture in which the names and merits of the various men are recorded. In the seventeenth year of Chên-kuan (643) the emperor T'ai-tsung commissioned him to paint portraits of twenty-four meritorious officials for the Ling-yen ko (a kind of Memorial Hall), for which the emperor himself wrote the eulogies. He was furthermore, in the same era, commanded to make some pictures of the foreign envoys who came to pay homage to the Chinese emperor, and also to commemorate in a painting the bravery of Prince Kuo (Yüan-fêng), who with a single shot from his bow killed a terrible blue tiger which had caused havoc in certain districts. The emperor T'ai-tsung had, as a matter of fact, a particular liking for Yên Li-pên and used to call him the "Colour Magician". But Li-pên does not seem to have been altogether pleased by the fact that he was appreciated mainly as a painter and kept busy as such, at least if we may credit the following anecdote:

On a spring day, when T'ai-tsung was strolling with some courtiers in the palace garden, he saw a

strange bird bob up and down on the waves of a lake, which caused him great pleasure. He told the courtiers to compose poems about it, and asked them "to get hold of Li-pên quickly for him to make a picture of the bird. All the ministers began shouting for the 'painting-master', though Li-pên was already at the time a high official. He came running and perspiring and crouched down by the lake in order to paint. But the onlookers were all seated, and he felt greatly humiliated. When he came back home from this visit to the court, he said to his son: 'In my youth I liked to read and compose poetry, but now the emperor considers me simply as a painter and makes me do the work of a servant. What a humiliation! I warn you, do not practise this art!' But, as he was an artist by nature, he could never give up painting."

When his brother died in 656, Li-pên became his successor as President of Kung-pu and eleven years later (668) he became Minister of the Right (one of the two prime ministers), while Chiang Lo, an officer who had conducted some campaigns in the desert, became Minister of the Left: it then became a common saying that the one minister was good only in painting, while the other was good only in war. Chang Yen-yüan opposes this verdict, however, and calls it empty talk inspired by stupidity, and he also thinks that the anecdote, reported from the T'ang history, is an invention, because the emperor T'ai-tsung would not have treated one of his highly esteemed officials with disrespect. However this may be, it has survived as an amusing contribution to the characterization of Yên Li-pên in his somewhat embarrassing double position as the greatest painter of the time and one of the foremost officials of two great emperors. He died in 673, and was given the posthumous name *Wên-chên* (True Scholar).

Like most of the great painters of the Sui and early T'ang period, Yên Li-pên devoted his art pre-eminently to religious subjects – more than half

¹ In Giles, *Introduction*, etc. (p.40, second ed.) this picture is said to represent "The Eighteen Scholars of the Ch'in dynasty".

the number of the forty pictures listed under his name in the *Hsian-ho hua-p'u* represent Buddhist or Taoist motifs – but his fame with posterity is nevertheless mainly based on his skill as a recorder of past and present personages and events which were considered of national importance. Several of his pictures of this kind are described by subsequent writers and some of them survive in later versions, while hardly anything remains of his religious paintings.

One or two of his historical paintings were already taken note of in our account of Yen Li-pên's life according to Chang Yen-yüan, as for instance *The Eighteen Scholars in the Palace of Ch'in*, *The Twenty-four Meritorious Officials*, the picture of Prince Kuo Shooting the Blue Tiger, and *Foreign Nations Bringing Tribute*; others belonging to the same class will be mentioned presently. Li Ssü-chên's words, that it was the two Yens who made the art of portraiture prosper again after the death of Lu T'an-wei and Hsieh Ho (from the South) and Yang Tzû-hua (from the North) contain some truth, though simplified. The author describes one of Yen's pictures of foreign envoys arriving with tribute of jade from the T'u mountain and precious silks, and notes the strange habits of the barbarians, such as "drinking through the nose and making the head fly", which could be observed in Yen's painting.

Best known among Yen Li-pên's pictures of foreign envoys bringing tribute to the emperor were those entitled *Hsi-yü t'u* (Western Nations) and *Chih-kung t'u*. The former seems to be lost without a trace, but it still existed in the Yüan dynasty, when it was seen by Chao Mêng-fu, who expressed his admiration in the following words: "In painting, the most difficult things are the human figures, and the old painters also paid special attention to implements, costumes, and manners. This picture is wonderful in all these respects. Every hair seems to move, and the figures seem to speak as in a vision. It is truly a divine work."¹

The *Chih-kung t'u* (Tribute Bearers) is mentioned

in the catalogue of the emperor Ch'ien-lung's collection, and is said to have consisted of twenty-five sections. It contained many strange things, such as two large lions and several smaller ones with heads like tigers and the bodies of bears, strange and wild beasts, quite unlike the lions painted by other masters. The foreign king was surrounded by singing girls and ten attendants.

A section of this composition seems to be preserved in a minor scroll which formerly was exhibited under Yen Li-pên's name in the Wên-hua tien of the Peking Palace Museum. The composition answers quite well to the descriptions of *Chih-kung t'u*; it comprises a number of strange-looking men with very large grotesque heads, some in long gowns, others almost naked, carrying all sorts of marvellous objects such as elephant's tusks, large pieces of petrified wood (or minerals), fans made of colourful plumes, bows and caskets, or leading different kinds of strange animals. The picture is entertaining as an illustration, the characterization of the figures is bordering on the grotesque, and though the execution reveals the hand of a late copyist, it transmits a rather definite style and temperament. The enthusiasm of the old critics for Yen's paintings of strange people and animals was apparently well founded.

More important as a document of early Chinese painting is, however, the large scroll (5'31" × 0'51" m.) representing thirteen Chinese emperors from the Han to the Sui dynasty, which belongs to the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. The picture is one of the most famous specimens of early Chinese art still existing and has become known through series of reproductions published in China and Japan since the beginning of this century. It has been repeatedly discussed by Chinese and Japanese authorities and ascribed to Yen Li-pên. The most recent account of its history together with an examination of its artistic quality may be read in the article by Mr. K. Tomita in *The Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts*,

¹ Quoted in *Ch'ing-ho shu-hua fang*, III, I, 38, from *Ku-chin hua-chien*.

Boston, February 1932, from which we borrow a few of the most important points (Pl. 72).

The thirteen personages forming the motifs of the scroll seem to be a somewhat arbitrary selection from the long series of emperors of various dynasties who reigned in China, or over parts of the country, from Chao-wên-ti of the Western Han (179-157 B.C.) to Yang-ti of the Sui dynasty (607-617). Among the following five (groups II-VI) there is one emperor of the Eastern Han dynasty (Kuang-wu-ti), one of the Wei (Wên-ti, 220-226), one of the Posterior Han dynasty (Chao-liêh-ti, 221-223), one of the Wu dynasty (Ta-ti, 222-252) and one of the Western Chin (Wu-ti, 265-290), but none of the more remarkable rulers of China during the above-mentioned dynasties. Then follow four emperors of the Ch'ên dynasty (reigning in Nan-king 560-589), though not in strict chronological order, i.e. Hsüan-ti, Wên-ti, Fei-ti, and Hou-chu. The three last figures represent Wu-ti of the Northern Chou dynasty (561-578) and the two Sui emperors Wên-ti and Yang-ti (581-617).

It can hardly be denied that the first part of the selection is not only incomplete but also far from representative. The emperors selected from the Han, Wei and Wu dynasties are, as a matter of fact, among the least known of their times, and one may wonder, in particular, why no imperial representative of the eventful two and a half centuries between 290 and 560 is included in the series. The Sung, Ch'i and Liang dynasties which reigned during this period were, from a cultural as well as a political point of view, more influential and memorable than most of the ruling houses represented in the picture; they are often mentioned in connexion with the history of painting. It should also be noted that the main lacunae in the series of the emperors lie between the first six (leading up to the year 290) and the seven last (starting with the year 560).

The supposition that some figures are missing at this junction may also be connected with the fact that the section of the picture containing the first six emperors is painted on a different, somewhat

coarser silk than the latter portion of the scroll. The difference in the materials of the two sections is quite obvious on closer examination, and one may also notice, at least in some of the figures, differences in the quality of execution. It seems as if the first six groups had been executed by a less trained and competent master than some of the groups in the latter portion of the scroll. This has led to the supposition, expressed by Mr. Tomita, that those six groups are "later in date" and replacements of corresponding earlier groups which had been much worn and "gone beyond repair". If such actually was the case, as may be assumed, one may ask whether there were not more figures "beyond repair" which were cut off and not replaced by copies.

Answers to these conjectural questions are no longer possible. We have to leave them open and turn our attention instead to the six groups in the latter part of the scroll, which presumably are of earlier date, and to the colophons at the end of the picture.¹ To start with these, it should be noted that the earliest writing, on which the signature has been lost through the deterioration of the silk, may be dated to the year 1000 or slightly earlier. In this it is stated that the picture was executed by Yen Li-pên in the Chên-kuan era (627-649). It is, as far as we know, the first definite attribution of the picture to the early T'ang master. The same attribution is repeated by several writers of the Sung period, who also communicate the names of some of the successive owners of the picture. Most interesting among these later colophons is the one by Chou Pi-ta (written about 1188), a well-known minister of state, who tells that his brother Chou Pi-chêng had acquired the picture for 500,000 cash, and as he found it in a precarious state, had it repaired at the cost of 40,000 cash. After referring to the repair of the picture Chou Pi-ta writes: "I examined it, and of the thirteen emperors only in Hsüan-ti of the Ch'ên

¹ The main contents of the colophons are communicated in Mr. Tomita's article in *The Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts*, Boston, February 1932, from which they are quoted here.

dynasty, his two ministers, the two fan-carriers, two attendants and four litter-bearers, is the vigour of the brush especially excellent. The silk in this part is moreover particularly worn. I have no doubt that this portion is the genuine work of Yen Li-pên. The rest appears to me to have been copied from the old and is therefore somewhat better preserved".

If this rendering of Chou Pi-ta's criticism is correct, it appears that he considered the picture as a copy after an original by Yen Li-pên with the exception of one group in the very middle of the scroll which, owing to "the vigour of the brush" and its badly worn state of preservation impressed him as a section of the master's own work. It may be admitted that there are aesthetic reasons for such an opinion in so far as the Hsüan-ti group stands out as the most interesting from a formal as well as a psychological viewpoint; it seems more sensitive in drawing and characterization than some of the following groups. But as it is not painted on a separate piece of silk, joined to the rest of the scroll, it is difficult to understand how it could have been of earlier date and painted by a different hand than the rest. I can see no logical explanation to this riddle, but must admit that the Hsüan-ti group was painted simultaneously with the following six groups. If the Sung critic's opinion that these were copied after an original by Yen Li-pên is correct, then the Hsüan-ti group must also be a copy, though executed with greater care than the other groups and thus perhaps most closely akin to the master's original.

The picture is no longer in a condition which could be said to do justice to its original beauty; it appears in many parts somewhat crude. The figure designs are characterized by impressive grandeur. Most of the emperors, who are much larger than their retainers, are represented as standing in half profile or moving slowly forward, clad in long stiff robes with embroidered borders and belts and a sort of rectangular, fringed head-gear like a stiff board balanced on the cap. This ceremonial costume is repeated with slight variations in the first six groups and also in the eleventh and twelfth and together

with the uniform position of these figures contributes to an impression of monotonous stiffness. A modification of the attire is to be seen in the first and the last group, but the only figures represented in freer, more varied positions and less hieratic attire are the four emperors of the Ch'ên dynasty. Wên-ti and Fei-ti are both seated on a low stool or *daïs*, turned towards each other as if engaged in a posthumous conversation, while the graceful girls who stand behind are ready to serve their masters. The well-balanced groups have a touch of unconventional ease, but the main figures do not reveal any marked individuality. It is only in the Hsüan-ti figure that the facial characterization has reached the degree of an individual portrait. The emperor is by no means attractive, but there is a gleam of thoughtfulness, not to say cunning, in the sharply slit eyes which spreads a reflex of life over the bloated face. The servants around him – fan-bearers and litter-carriers – are drawn on a smaller scale and characterized as foreigners with lengthy faces and curving noses in contrast to their ponderous Chinese master (Pl. 73).

To what extent the painter invented these portraits or followed earlier models is not known, but the interpretations of the various characters are most likely his own. The formality of the ceremonial costumes and the prevailing postures are no doubt derived from earlier models. The imperial effigies which decorated the palace halls of the Han and later dynasties may have been more or less of this kind. Some of these figures would indeed appear quite monumental if executed on a large scale as wall-paintings. They impress us, as said above, more by the grandeur of the designs than by the quality of the brush-work or colouring. The colouring is as a matter of fact rather simplified, dominated by black and brick-red, to which are added some pale green and yellow tones besides white. Effects of modelling have been obtained mainly by adding darker tones on the neutral under-paint, as may be observed not only in the folds but also in the reddish faces, but there is very little of the sensitiveness or ductility of

the brush (often praised by native critics in their descriptions of the works of the old masters) which would serve to enhance the life and expressiveness of the figures. They are characterized with a typifying neutrality, which makes us wonder whether this is the result of a conscious effort to emphasize the archaic origin of the models, or whether it should be attributed to a copying painter who, with all the care and skill that he gave to the work, did not transmit the creative impetus or "life-movement".

The supposition noted above that the picture as it exists today is not the work of one single artist, may well be correct, but unfortunately there are no historical records or clues as to the date of execution of either the first or the second portion of this scroll. We are simply informed by the minister Chou Pi-ta that it was in need of thorough repairs at the end of the twelfth century. It seems to have been an old picture already at that time, though, according to the same authority, only to a minor extent an original by Yen Li-pên.

How this statement is to be brought in harmony with the material conditions of the picture, such as may be observed today, is however a problem difficult to solve. We have only been able to distinguish two somewhat different portions, one painted on a coarser and the other on a finer quality of silk. And the difference in the quality of the brush-work in the two sections is not such as to make it probable that they are divided by an interval of three or four hundred years.

The final answers to these questions are hardly possible as long as there are not other pictures known which may be accepted as works of the period. We must therefore for the present leave the questions open and consider this famous Scroll of the Emperors as an early and faithful representative of the style and spirit of Yen Li-pên's art. It is as such an interesting example of the kind of painting and portraiture that prevailed in official circles at the beginning of the seventh century.

A rather different, somewhat shorter scroll in the Boston Museum which represents Scholars of the

Northern Ch'i Dynasty Collating Classical Texts has also been attributed to Yen Li-pên by prominent critics ever since the Sung Period.¹ In a colophon to the picture written by Fan Ch'êng-ta (1126-1193) it is stated: "The picture of Collating Books in the Northern Ch'i is traditionally said to be done in the manner of Yen Li-pên. It is described fully in Huang T'ing-chien's (1050-1110) *Records of Paintings*. This scroll, however, lacks the seven scholars who were seated on two platforms. It is clear that half (of the whole picture) has been lost". The four other inscriptions by men of the Sung period refer to the motif and not to the artist, but in the later colophons by connoisseurs of the Ch'ing dynasty the picture is again commended as a work by Yen Li-pên, and it is also described as such by An I-chou in *Mo-yüan hui-kuan* and by Lu Hsin-yüan in *Jang-li kuan kuò yen-hu*. In the Boston Museum it is now catalogued as a work of the Northern Sung period, probably after a design by Yen Li-pên, which, no doubt, is the most exact definition that can be given to this beautiful picture (Pls. 76-78).

It represents a gathering of five scholars assisted by a number of male and female servants, occupied in reading and copying ancient writings, and probably (as stated above) reproduces only one-half of the original composition. The scholars who were appointed in 556 by the emperor Wen-hsüan of the Northern Ch'i dynasty to collate the classical texts were twelve in number, and, according to Huang T'ing-chien, the original picture or drawing (*fên-pên*) represented the whole company. The very free and animated composition reaches its culmination in the group on the dais, where one of the worthy scholars is pulling the trouser belt of one of his colleagues, who is preparing to go away and who resists the friendly pull with a smile.

This central group is by itself a masterpiece of composition and it must have become particularly famous, because we find it also reproduced in a

¹ Cf. Mr. K. Tomita's article on this picture, containing all the historical information regarding it, in *The Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*, August 1931.

picture, formerly in the Palace Museum in Peking and attributed to Ch'iu Wên-po, a painter of the tenth century.¹ In this picture, which is known to me only in reproduction, the dais with the four scholars and the female servants standing behind and at the side (carrying the *ch'in* and the big cushion?) are placed in a landscape. There are rocks and some high trees in the background, and the whole thing has been changed into a vertical composition in accordance with the pictorial ideas of a later period. This may have been done in the tenth century, though (as far as can be perceived in the reproduction) the execution of the picture in the Palace Museum points to a later date. On the other hand, it is quite possible that Yen Li-pên's picture was based on an earlier model, because the motif had also been represented by a painter of the sixth century called Yang Tzû-hua, who was greatly admired by Yen.

Yen was no doubt a faithful traditionalist and several of his famous paintings were based on earlier versions of the same or similar motifs, but he transformed them freely, often adding entertaining quasi-realistic features and a vivid characterization of the *dramatis personae* that may be observed also in this later version of the so-called Collating of the Books. The figures are all represented in significant situations, intensely occupied with the task on hand. They form an entertaining group of scholarly types into whose company the beholder would like to step. The psychological characterization may to some extent have been accentuated by the artist – probably of the Sung period – who did this version of Yen's composition, but the fundamental features, including the individual types and postures, were no doubt defined already in the T'ang picture. These old scholars may be said to transmit more of Yen Li-pên's mastery as a painter of human character than the emperors in the scroll described above.

As mentioned in a previous chapter, no old master seems to have attracted more admiration from Yen Li-pên than Chang Sêng-yü. He is reported to have said about Chang: "The fame of the master was no empty pretence";² and he sup-

ported this opinion by utilizing certain elements of Chang Sêng-yü's art in his own works. Two of the most famous among these, i.e. The Drunken Taoist Monk and The Brushing of the White Elephant, were mentioned in our chapter on the older master. But since neither Chang Sêng-yü's nor Yen Li-pên's versions of these paintings has been preserved, our ideas about their respective characteristics, based simply on descriptive records, are rather vague. The Brushing of the White Elephant remained a favourite motif all through the Sung, Yüan and Ming periods and, as remarked before, certain archaic features may be traced in some later renderings of the motif in spite of important variations.

The pictures of the Drunken Monk are mentioned by Chang Yen-yüan as well as by Kuo Jo-hsü and Tung Yu of Sung,³ but the composition is not known to us through actual copies. It may be noted, that in discussing this picture Tung Yu quotes the statements of earlier writers such as Liu Su,⁴ who mentions the picture of the Drunken Taoist Monk by Yen Li-pên as well as another called the Drunken Buddhist Monk, but he knew them apparently only through literary descriptions or hearsay. Kuo Jo-hsü transmits practically the same information and speaks more definitely about Yen Li-pên's picture of the Drunken Taoist as a riposte to Chang's painting of the Drunken Buddhist Monk, and though he says that both pictures have been transmitted, we are left with the impression that neither Kuo Jo-hsü nor Tung Yu had seen them. They tell about the fame of the pictures, but offer no information as to their compositions or formal characteristics. Nor does it appear from Chang Yen-yüan's words that he had actually seen these paintings, though he is a little more explicit. Referring to the above-mentioned

¹ Reproduced in *Ku-feng*, vol. I.

² These words are reported by Tung Yu in his description of Yen Li-pên's picture, *The Bridge over the Wei River*, in *Kuang-ch'uan hua-pa*, IV.

³ *Li-tai ming-hua chi*, Chapter EK. *T'u-hua chien-wên chih*, vol. V, 1, 3. *Kuang-ch'uan hua-pa*, III, 1, 42, 43.

⁴ Liu Su, zzu Ting-ching, author of several books, served as minister at the beginning of the T'ien-pao era (742-755).

statements by Liu Su, he writes: "It is said that Chang Sêng-yu painted the Drunken Monk, which caused the monks to get together and collect money. They asked Yen Li-pên to paint a cap on the monk and thus change him into a Taoist – but this is not according to reason."

This note is attached to a short biography of the painter Ho Ch'ang-shou, "who followed the same manner as Fan Ch'ang-shou, though he was a little inferior". The two painters cannot have been much younger than Yen Li-pên; Fan was a military officer at the beginning of the T'ang period, and both are classified by Chang Yen-yüan as "followers of

Chang Sêng-yu". We are furthermore told that Fan as well as Ho did a picture of the Drunken Taoist, and these were so remarkable that they sometimes were accepted as works by Chang Sêng-yu, "which was quite wrong", to quote Chang Yen-yüan.

These quotations are significant in so far as they prove that the motif was quite popular in the Sui and early T'ang period; it was treated by various painters, including Yen Li-pên, but whether any of their compositions have been preserved is difficult to tell, since no one of the old writers gives an actual description of the picture.

II

Li Ssü-hsiün and Li Chao-tao

IT WAS only after the middle of the seventh century in the time of the emperor Kao-tsung (650-683) that the creative forces of T'ang were brought to full expansion also in the field of painting. This was accomplished by a long row of highly-gifted artists born about or shortly after the mid-century who reached their maturity in the halcyon days of the emperor Hsüan-tsung (713-750) just before the political storms wrought havoc also to artistic pursuits. The somewhat older painters, like the two Yen, who had been active during the first half of the century, were links with the past rather than representatives of a new age.

The earliest representative of the new generation of painters was Li Ssü-hsiün, who was born in 651 and died 716. He was the foremost of a family which included several painters, i.e. his son Li Chao-tao, his brother Li Ssü-hui, and the two sons of the brother, Li Shih-hui and Li Lin-fu, and also a nephew of Lin-fu called Li Ts'ou. To some of these younger members of the family, like Li Lin-fu, who were engaged heart and soul in the entanglements

of the political drama, painting can hardly have been more than a pleasant distraction fitted for men of culture and high social rank. But as these men belonged to the same Li clan as the reigning house of T'ang, they enjoyed protection in high quarters and received many tokens of imperial favour. The old Li was honoured by various appointments or sinecures and became finally, when the emperor Hsüan-tsung ascended the throne, Senior General of the Palace Guard and was raised to the rank of Duke of P'êng-ch'êng, while Lin-fu reached the position of a prime minister, in which capacity he earned an ignominious fame.

According to literary records, which naturally are abundant in the case of a man like Li Ssü-hsiün, he was not simply one of the foremost painters of the time and greatly admired by his contemporaries, but also the originator of a specific style of landscape-painting and holds as such a very important place in the history of this art.

His individual merit in this respect, it is true, can no longer be defined on the basis of actual paintings,

but the series of eminent painters who, according to the historical records, followed his lead in landscape-painting and whose works may still be seen, form an imposing testimony to the general nature and characteristics of his achievement as a landscapist. The new departures which contributed most effectively to the fame of Li Ssü-hsün's landscapes were connected with his use of certain colours, and his pictures are described as *ch'ing lü pai* (blue, green and white), or *chün pi shan-shui* (gold and green landscapes), which, however, did not exclude the use of other colours for certain details such as buildings, boats and the like. The colours were applied with a view to the decorative effect; the background was sometimes sprinkled with gold-dust, and the silk was prepared and beaten with a solution of chalk and glucose so as to form a perfectly smooth and glossy surface for painting.

Li Ssü-hsün's individual genius has been variously estimated by critics of various camps according as they leaned towards the so-called "Northern" or "Southern" School of landscape-painting. This highly theoretical division of Chinese landscape-painting into two general schools or currents of style was not formulated until the beginning of the seventeenth century, when Tung Ch'í-ch'ang made it one of the principal tenets in his exposition of the development of painting, but it had existed, no doubt, as a sort of general background for the appreciation of painting since earlier times. It became, so to speak, codified as a retroactive aesthetic doctrine through Tung Ch'í-ch'ang, and it may thus be appropriate to quote his formulation here, even though a further discussion of the same must be left for a later occasion. Li Ssü-hsün's and Li Chao-tao's historical positions are here defined in a conclusive way, though without any characterization of their actual manners of painting. Tung Ch'í-ch'ang wrote as follows:

"In Ch'an Buddhism there are a Southern and a Northern School, which first separated in the T'ang period. In painting a similar division into a Southern and a Northern School was brought about in the

same period. But the men did not come from the South and the North respectively. The Northern School took its origin from Li Ssü-hsün, the father and his son, who applied colours to their landscape paintings. Their manner was transmitted in the Sung period by Chao Kan, Chao Po-chü, Chao Po-su, down to Ma Yüan, Hsia Kuei and others. The Southern School started with Mo-ch'í (Wang Wei), who used light washes (of ink) instead of sharply defining outlines (hookings and cuttings), and this was continued by Chang Tsao, Ching Hao, Kuan T'ung, Chü-jan, Kuo Ching-shu and the two Mi, father and son, down to the four great masters of the Yüan period", etc.

The ideas expressed in the above quotation were not exactly new, they had been partly suggested also by earlier critics, though not so definitely formulated as in the words of Tung Ch'í-ch'ang. T'ang Hou, who wrote his chronicle *Hua Chien* in the Yüan period, makes some appropriate remarks about Li Ssü-hsün's manner of painting and his following which are worth quoting: "Li Ssü-hsün used gold and green in painting his coloured landscapes; by this he produced brilliant effects and created his own style. His son Chao-tao changed the style of his father and was even more marvellous.

"During the period of the Five Dynasties Li Shêng, who painted coloured landscapes, was also called 'The Little General'. During the Sung era Chao Po-chü, *tsü* Ch'ien-li, who was a member of the imperial family, again revived their style. He was a pleasant but superficial personality without any important (ancient) ideas. I have seen Li Ssü-hsün's paintings of a female spirit and of the Emperor Ming-huang rambling in the imperial park. They are both among the best works he ever did. I have also seen Li Chao-tao's picture representing the sea-coast. The silk of this is much damaged but the brilliant colouring is still visible. If we look for the origin of their style, it seems that it was derived from Chan Tzü-ch'ien."

The last remark is particularly interesting as a hint about the first impulse or origin of the *ch'ing lü pai*

style which became the speciality of the Li school. But Chan Tzū-ch'ien's fame is nowadays simply a matter of tradition, and it seems probable that there were other painters who influenced Li Ssū-hsün just as much as this old master. Thus, for instance, Chang Yen-yüan, who wrote his *Ming-hua chi* only about a hundred years after Li's activity, presents a rather different idea regarding Li's position and derivation as a landscape painter in the chapter called "A Discussion of Landscape Painting", where he states that the new school of landscape "started with Wu and was further perfected by the two Li", a statement which, in spite of its obvious chronological confusion, seems to imply that in the Tang period Li was not considered as the founder of a new school of landscape-painting, but simply as a skilful follower or continuator of the impetus given by a stronger creative personality. This view may not be, strictly speaking, in contradiction to the one expressed by Tung Ch'ü-ch'ang eight hundred years later, but it places Li Ssū-hsün in a secondary position. Chang Yen-yüan's appreciation of Li Ssū-hsün was obviously much less than his admiration for Wu Tao-tzū, and this may also have been the simple reason why he says that the new school of landscape-painting "started with Wu" (though he was about fifty years younger than Li). From all that we know about the two painters it is, however, difficult to imagine that there ever was a stylistic relation between them; their respective manners and technical methods represented opposite poles, as will become clear after we have also paid some attention to Wu Tao-tzū's artistic activity. This fundamental difference is to some extent illustrated by the well-known anecdote, according to which Li and Wu were sent by the emperor Hsüan-tsung to the country of Shu to make pictures of some famous views, an expedition from which Li returned well furnished with carefully prepared sketches, whereas Wu brought nothing of the kind back with him. He did not need it, because he carried "it all in his heart" – and when he finally took up the brush, in a moment of inspiration, within a day he completed a

most magnificent painting embracing hundreds of miles of rivers and mountains.

We shall have occasion to learn more about Wu's miraculous way of wielding the brush in a following chapter, and may here limit ourselves to Li's manner of working as far as it can be ascertained through copies and descriptions by early critics.

Chang Yen-yüan only makes some general remarks about Li's landscapes and points out that they represent "rushing waters, winding streams and the vaporous effect of rosy clouds at sunset, thus reminding one of the abodes of the Immortals" – a simile repeated in many later descriptions of similar pictures, and which no doubt is chosen with an eye to the romantic atmosphere and illustrative contents of these landscapes. We know them from more or less successful repetitions; they are not views from the common world of mortals, the inspiration for them seems rather to have been drawn from fairy tales, in which heaven and earth meet like white clouds and green mountains, while the sun paints a golden lining round every form.

The motifs are often quite vast in spite of the small scale of the paintings: boundless stretches of water, rugged inaccessible peaks piercing through clouds, deep valleys with clumps of blossoming trees, lofty terraces with open galleries and pavilions on the border of streams spanned by arched bridges on which solitary figures stand in contemplation. The decorative stylization of mountains and water, trees and buildings, bridges and terraces is sharp and clear, transposing the whole thing into a pattern of bright blue and green, interspersed with white and red tones, sometimes outlined with gold. The execution is sensitive and refined, almost as in miniatures, and the whole scenery is enveloped in the transparent veil of a poetic vision.

The style is delicate but fairly consistent and recognizable even in relatively late and free renderings of Li Ssū-hsün's compositions such as, for instance, the long handscroll in the Freer Gallery, known as *A Landscape with Hsien-jên*. It is a dioramic view of mountains and water in a light haze, lofty

buildings, zig-zag galleries, curving bridges and groves of blossoming trees where white-robed Immortals pass along like faint echoes from a world of dreams. The wide sweep of the design and the luminous colouring endow the picture with a striking decorative effect which, in spite of the meticulous execution, caused the picture to be classified in former times as a paragon of beauty.¹

An important picture by the master, said to have existed in the Manchu Household collection, known as *Gaily Coloured Lotus in the Imperial Garden*,² is described in *Ch'ing-ho shu-hua fang* by Chang Ch'ou, who also reports some colophons by contemporary critics regarding its exceptional qualities. According to this writer, it was painted with gold-dust, deep red and green colours, and in refinement surpassed all common works. Ni Tzan and Wang Mêng had written poems on it, but these were no longer preserved when Chang Ch'ou saw it in 1617. He quotes, however, two colophons, one by Wên Chia (1575), and another by Wang Ch'ih-têng, a distinguished connoisseur of the same period, who describes the picture as follows:

"It contains lofty buildings, temples, houses, gate-screens, costumes and boats with their oars, all painted with the utmost skill and refinement, including every detail down to the smallest grass-blade. The mountains stand clear and luminous in the light of the setting sun; the billowing waters of the lake reach far beyond the limits (of the view). Red flowers, rushing streams, green trees, soaring clouds and meandering rivers, . . . The T'ang painters were not very far removed from those of the Chin dynasty; the traditions from Ku K'ai-chih and Lu T'an-wei were then still alive. No later painters have been able to imitate those old masters so closely."

The last remark, which no doubt is quite correct in regard to a traditionalist like Li Ssü-hsün, may also contain a key to his great fame. To an unusual extent he fulfilled the Chinese demand for faithfulness to ancient models, and possessed also the ability

to evoke the impression of *ts'ang lao*, or *ts'ang ku*, by which the Chinese signify something not simply old-fashioned but also highly original. Li Ssü-hsün's work was, according to these critics, distinguished by a kind of perfection that no other painter of the T'ang period could reach. There must indeed have been a reason why such a great representative of the old Chinese culture as Ou-yang Hsiu of the Sung period called him "a peerless artist up to this very day".

Li Chao-tao, the son of Li Ssü-hsün, has probably contributed more than his father to the artistic fame of the family, because some paintings by him or in his manner seem to have survived, whereas those of the older Li are known only through descriptions or very late imitations. He was commonly called the Little General Li in contradistinction to his father, the Great General Li, though he probably never had the official title. He lived through the best years of the T'ang period until about the middle of Hsüan-tsung's reign (c.730) and seems to have been a well-known master, no less appreciated than his famous father.

Chang Yen-yüan writes that "he changed the manner of his father and surpassed the latter. He served for a while as a tutor of the crown prince and was the first to paint wonderful seascapes." But the artistic activities of the two Li were not very strictly separated in popular parlance, because of their close personal and artistic relations. It seems, indeed, from a chronological viewpoint, more probable that it was the younger and not the older Li who was sent together with Wu Tao-tzû to paint some of the imposing scenery in the country of Shu.

Our ideas about Li Chao-tao's art are mainly based on three pictures in the former Palace Museum,

¹ This picture induced Laufer to the exclamation: "He who has not seen the wonderful roll attributed to Li Ssü-hsün in the possession of Mr. Freer, does not know what art is - in technique as well as in mental depth perhaps the greatest painting in existence. Greek and Italian art fade into a trifle before this glorious monument of a divine genius, which it would be futile to describe in any words." *Oriental. Zeitschr.*, 1912-13, I, p.35.

² Cf. John C. Ferguson, *Chinese Painting*, p.70.

which may be of the period and represent a fairly homogeneous style. Two of them are reproduced in *Ku-kung*, vols. 17 and 26, and one in *Ku-kung shu-hua chi*, vol. 32. The last-mentioned also exhibited in London 1935 is in the shape of an album-leaf and represents a building called The Loyang Tower, a highly elaborate construction in three stories with galleries and winged roofs which is executed with the meticulous refinement of a miniature painting. The trees and rocks are only secondary elements, hardly sufficient to convey the character of a landscape.

The two others are large landscapes, one called The Ch'ü River, the other Travellers amidst Mountains in Spring. They are both painted with colours on silk but impressive mainly through their strongly emphasized linear designs. The pictures look as if they were incised on metal, the details are so clearly defined that they almost destroy the unity of the design; yet it prevails.

The so-called Ch'ü River Landscape is the most remarkable (Pl. 81). The composition is spread over a large surface (5' 3" × 3' 4") and makes at first sight an almost bewildering impression. The upper portion of it consists of deeply folded and fissured mountains which seem to be bulging and crawling out of the misty background. At their foot are two arms of a river enclosing a wooded promontory that slopes down and out, an impression which becomes still more marked in the lower portion of the picture, which is to a large extent filled with vast compounds of terraces, courtyards, pavilions, galleries and gateways, all as seen from above and placed on a ground that slopes down towards the river or moat where boats are converging on a small harbour. To enumerate all the architectural details would carry us too far, and in spite of their exact delineation they interest us less as illustrations than as integrating elements in a grand design. The parts suggested by nature, such as the towering masses of humps and boulders with their clumps of trees and winding paths, remind us to some extent of corresponding elements in the landscapes ascribed to

Ching Hao and Kuan T'ung, even though they are rendered in a more myopic manner. Li Chao-tao was apparently aiming in the same direction as the great landscapists of the tenth century, but he had not as yet found the free pictorial expression for his romantic conceptions. He remained more timidly descriptive with a stronger attachment to the world of men than to the actual mountains and streams. His picture is essentially a compromise in which the separate portions or elements of composition are skilfully noted but not completely blended.

The other landscape in the same collection is not so large but no less remarkable for its design (Pl. 82). The mountains which screen the background are very thin, sharply cut and pointed like tall pieces of crystalline minerals. At their foot are some plummy trees sheltering a glade where a company of travellers are resting while their horses roll on the ground, and others ride along, to continue their journey. The picture is entertaining as an illustration, owing to the vivid presentation of the men and the horses, but its rather unusual decorative effect is a matter of the fantastic rock-formations. These are no less artificial than the rocks in the larger picture, though of a different type. The two pictures may be, as attributed, works by the same master; they are both transitional products in which the observations from nature are as yet less prominent than the linear stylization and the painter's delight in pictorial story-telling.

Practically the same motif as in the last-named picture – i.e. travellers resting in a glade at the foot of steep mountains and then proceeding on their journey – reappears in a horizontal composition in the former National Museum in Peking, possibly a part of a longer scroll, illustrating the emperor Ming-huang's journey to Shu. In the catalogue of the Museum this picture (Pl. 83), which has aroused much interest among Western art-historians since its publication in 1932, is attributed to an anonymous master of the Sung period, but if there is some reason for this attribution the painter must have worked very faithfully after an earlier original.

The style is closely related to that of Li Chao-tao, and the composition is apparently based on his picture mentioned above, though the execution may be a little more advanced in a pictorial sense (to judge by reproductions). In other words, the drawing of the sharply silhouetted and deeply split rocks as well as of the trees and the figures is much the same as in Li's picture, yet the effect is different, owing to the shading and modelling in colour. A closer comparison between these two related landscapes is hardly possible without seeing them side by side, but the picture of the former National Museum is a somewhat later version by a skilful perpetuator of the Li style.

The fragmentary picture in the Boston Museum, which represents the so-called Chiu-ch'eng palace of the emperor T'ang T'ai-tsung, seems to be one of the many free copies or transpositions of famous compositions by Li Chao-tao made in later times. It is colouristically effective and beautifully reproduced as a work by Li Chao-tao in an article by Chavannes and Petrucci in *Art Asiatique*, vol.I (1913).

Among pictures attributed to Li Chao-tao may still be mentioned the handscroll in the Fujii collection (Yurinkan) called *Mountains in Spring*. It is accompanied by a colophon written about 1457 by the poet Li Tung-yang and may possibly have been painted about the same epoch. The composition is traditional – a river-view accompanied by craggy mountains and groups of spare trees – and rendered in the green and gold colour-scheme which is said to have been introduced by the two Li.

The fact that the two Li were distant relatives of the imperial family was no doubt of importance not only for their social position, but also for their artistic fame, which outshone that of other contemporary landscape-painters. It may, however, be recalled that the current of style which they represented was not the only one at the time. There was also another tradition, existent since pre-T'ang times, which had prominent representatives at the beginning of the eighth century. It originated from Chang Sêng-yu and was known as the "boneless"-

manner, i.e. a broader pictorial style suited for a more decorative or colouristic interpretation of the motifs. The best-known representative of this current in the K'ai-yüan epoch (714-741) was Yang Shêng, mentioned in an earlier chapter among the followers of Chang Sêng-yu. His name is often met with on landscapes of a definite type, easily recognizable even though in relatively indifferent late editions.

The motif is usually snow-covered hills somewhat soft or flat, with no visible structural divisions, appearing like broad silhouettes against a dark winter sky. A few large trees are as a rule placed at the foot of the mountains and there is a man on horseback passing over a bridge (cf. the picture in the Moore collection). Sometimes the motif is extended along a scroll of grey waters, framed by snow-covered hills and rows of dark pine-trees, as may be seen in the picture in the former Palace Museum representing *Abundant Snow over the Mountains along a broad river*. A few small fishing-boats on the water bring a touch of human life into this bleak world of snow and motionless grey water. The scenery is the same as in one of Wang Wei's famous compositions, but the atmosphere is cold and empty (Pl.85).

More interesting as a possible work of the period under discussion is the somewhat smaller handscroll in the former National Museum (*Wên-hua tien*) in Peking which is described in the catalogue as *An Autumn Landscape* by an Unknown Painter of the T'ang period. It would be difficult to attach a definite artist's name to this picture, but its early date is made probable by the boldness of the design and the manner of execution. The emphasis is here on the structural quality of the forms, which stand out in strong relief, emphasized by a very effective pictorial treatment, particularly of the ruddy autumn trees (Pl.84). A picture like this makes us realize that certain types of coloured landscapes of the T'ang period were more akin to European painting of relatively modern times than most of the later more freely transcribed interpretations of the motifs and moods of nature.

III

Wu Tao-tzū

THE EXPANSIVE spirit which was so characteristic of the first half of the T'ang dynasty and which found such brilliant expressions in political and religious activities during the reigns of the emperors T'ai-tsung and Kao-tsung burst into a brilliant florescence of literature and the figurative arts in the time of the emperor Hsüan-tsung (713-756). Poetry and painting in particular rose to a level never attained before and contributed more than ever to make this period a "Golden Age" of aesthetic culture comparable to the greatest creative epochs of Greece and Rome.

This view, often expressed by modern writers on Chinese history, has become familiar to western students through the study of the great poets of the time, whose works have been made accessible in translations which reveal something of the spirit of the age. Poets of immortal fame like Li Po, Tu Fu and Po Chü-i have probably been of more importance for the contact between the China of T'ang times and the West than all the learned historians. They have revealed to us the response of the human heart to timeless values and thus established the background against which the characteristic profiles of the contemporary painters stand out with more or less marked individual features.

But, alas! The works of these artists which aroused the enthusiasm of critics and poets like Su Tung-p'o and Mi Fei, not to mention lesser men, are irreparably lost! We know them only through scanty descriptions and feeble imitations, and are inevitably forced to dwell more on literary records than on paintings which no longer exist in the original.

* * *

No Chinese artist has kindled the imagination and enthusiasm of the native critics more than Wu Tao-tzū. The reason for this may have been that he

himself was a highly imaginative individual, emancipated from the habitual limitations of artists. But the anecdotes about Wu's paintings and his inimitable manner of working are more abundant than the historical data regarding his career, which are reported with slight variations by Chang Yen-yüan and Chu Ching-hsüan.¹

According to these chroniclers Wu Tao-tzū, whose official name later on was changed to Wu Tao-hsüan, was a man of humble descent from Yang-chai (or Yang-ti) near Lo-yang in Honan. Already in his childhood as a poor orphan, he showed extraordinary genius for painting, and a quick temper and fondness for wine, gifts and inclinations which evidently became of decisive importance for his further life and activities. There are no definite records about the date of his birth and his education as a painter (except that he imitated Chang Sêng-yu's brush-work), but we have reason to assume that he was born about 680 or shortly before, and that he started by practising calligraphy no less than painting. In this way he reached a mastery of the brush which served him well in his capacity as a painter. "He studied the calligraphy of Chang Hsü and Ho Chih-chang", two of the "Eight Immortals of the Wine Cup", famous for their capacity for drinking no less than for their flowing style of writing, but as he "did not reach perfection in calligraphy, he worked (thenceforth) as a painter". If we may believe Chang Yen-yüan, Wu held a minor official post as a young man, though the report regarding this is quite vague.²

¹ In *Li-tai ming-hua t'z'u*, Chapter X and *T'ang-ch'ao ming-hua lu* (where he is placed in the foremost class). Later accounts in *Hsüan-ho hua-p'u*, *Sho-hua p'u* and other books are based on these two fundamental sources.

² The old historian says first that Wu served as a minor official under Wei Sui-ji, also known as Hsiao Yao-kung, a well-known Confucian statesman in the time of the empress Wu; but a few lines later he says: "His first official position was as a magistrate of Yen-chou Hsü-ch'ü (in Shantung)".

When the Emperor Hsüan-tsung heard about this extraordinary painter who used to "ramble about in the neighbourhood of the capital", he was invited to the imperial court. There he served first as instructor to the crown prince and was then ordered to paint only on imperial command. "In consequence of this official position he became a friend of Prince Ning" (the brother of the emperor), which no doubt meant promotion.

An event of particular interest in the career of Wu Tao-tzū was his meeting with general P'ei Min. The story is reported with some variations by different chroniclers, but its main contents are as follows: once in the K'ai-yüan era (713-742), at the time of an imperial visit to Lo-yang, Wu was brought there to meet general P'ei Min and the secretary Chang Hsü (known as "The Divine Grassist"). Each of these men was expected to display his particular talent. General P'ei Min offered Wu a quantity of gold and silk if he would personally execute a picture in the T'ien-kung ssü. But Wu refused to accept the gold and the silk, and told general P'ei that he would do the picture only if the general would perform his sword-dance; that would give him all the inspiration and reward for which he could wish. Chang Yen-yüan refers to the same story and gives a hint about the result in the following words: "When Tao-hsüan saw the general performing the sword-dance and observed how his life-breath appeared and disappeared, his brush-work became still more piercingly strong". And he did his picture so quickly that it seemed as if a god had helped him. He put on the colours himself and it became a work of incomparable beauty. And when the secretary Chang Hsü added an inscription covering a whole wall, the people said: "Today we have witnessed three marvellous things".

Chu Ching-hsüan mentions furthermore a wonderful picture by Wu in Hsüan-yüan miao representing Five Divine Men (ancient emperors) with a thousand officers in ceremonial outfit with headgear like clouds and dragons, which aroused the admira-

tion of Tu Fu, who said of it that it was "shaking the wall". And then he reports the characteristic story about how Wu prepared his great landscape-paintings:

"In the T'ien-pao era (742-755) the Emperor Ming-huang suddenly recalled the waters of the Chia-ling river on the road to Shu and despatched Wu to make sketches of those landscapes. When he came back and the emperor asked him to report about the work, he answered respectfully: 'Your servant has made no sketches; they are all in his heart'. Thereupon the emperor ordered him to execute his picture in the Ta-t'ung Hall; and so he painted a landscape of three hundred miles (along the Chia-ling river), finishing it all in a day." To this, as a contrast to Wu's performance, the author adds the following words about Li Ssü-hsün's landscape: "At that time general Li Ssü-hsün was (also) famous as a landscape-painter, and the emperor ordered him to execute a picture in the Ta-t'ung Hall. It took him several months to finish it. Ming-huang said: 'Li Ssü-hsün worked several months on his picture; Wu did his in a single day. They are both exceedingly wonderful'."

It seems indeed surprising that Chu Ching-hsüan, who on the whole is the best informed of Wu's biographers, repeats the story about Wu's and Li Ssü-hsün's landscapes from Shu without any reaction against the chronological discrepancy. It tends to show that he too, though writing less than a hundred years after Wu's death, was satisfied to characterize Wu as a painter by repeating popular tales without much discrimination. Yet he offers more information about Wu than any other critic, and is consequently well worth quoting:

"Wu also painted five dragons in one of the palace halls; their scales seemed to be moving and fluttering and, whenever it was going to rain, they emanated vapours and mist.

"Master Wu often took along (studied) the *Diamond Sūtra* and used it for meditation.

"In the T'ien-pao era (742-755) there was a painter

of equal fame called Yang T'ing-kuang,¹ who once made a sketch of Wu, quite unobserved, while Wu was talking with other people. But when he showed it to Wu, the master was greatly surprised and said to Yang T'ing-kuang: 'I am an ugly old fellow, why do you make a portrait of me?'

"It may indeed be said that his paintings of human beings, Buddhas, gods, demons, birds, animals, landscapes, terraces and buildings, plants and trees, were the best of the period, and that he was the foremost painter of the present dynasty.

"Chang Huai-kuan said: 'Tao-tzū was a reborn Chang Sêng-yu'; the remark seems correct."

To us it seems less convincing, the reason being that the two old masters are known to us only in relatively late and inadequate copies. Wu's dependence on Chang may, indeed, have been more evident in some of his wall-paintings representing dragons, demons, or stellar divinities, which were rendered with the same freedom as those by the older master.

According to the same author Wu executed more than three hundred paintings in the Buddhist and Taoist temples in the two capitals, and "not two of them were alike". He mentions in particular four temples, *viz.* T'ang-hsing ssū (with pictures inspired by the *Diamond Sūtra*), Tz'ū-ên ssū (pictures of Wên-shu and P'u-hsien and also the subjugation of Māra), Ching-kung ssū (a scene from Hell and figures of Indra and Brahma), and Yung-shou ssū (deities over the middle gate).

Why the author selected only these temples and paintings as worth mentioning, is difficult to tell. The chapter in *Li-tai ming-hua chi* (III, 4) which contains a list of the "Wall-paintings in the Buddhist and Taoist Temples of the Two Capitals", enumerates about sixty temples of which nearly half the number contained wall-paintings by Wu, as may be seen in the appendix to this chapter. Most of the pictures represented "spirits", "devas", "demons", Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and the like (such as Weimo-ch'i), but there were also scenes from Hell, dragons and portraits of monks, and at least one

real landscape, but none of the pictures is described in detail.

Chu Ching-hsüan must, however, have seen a certain number of Wu's paintings, because he states: "Whenever I saw a picture by Master Wu, what impressed me particularly was its superior brush-work, which is varied and most vigorous". In some cases the wall-paintings were done only in ink, and no one was considered competent to add colour to them. When he painted the halos he used no compass or foot-measure, but completed them with a single sweep of the brush.

"At the beginning of the Yüan-ho era (806-821), when I went up for examination (to the capital), I stayed in Lung-hsing ssū. There was then a man more than eighty years old (called Yin) who told me that when Wu painted the halo of a god inside the middle gate in Hsing-shan ssū all the people from the streets and market places of Ch'ang-an, old and young, learned men and common people, came in crowds to watch him until they formed something like a wall around him. He raised his brush and drew the halo in a single sweep with the force of a whirl-wind. And the people said: 'He must be aided by a god!'

"I also learned from an old monk in Ching-yün ssū that Master Wu painted some scenes from Hell in this temple, and when the butchers and fish-mongers of the capital came to see these pictures, they were frightened and changed the evil ways of their occupations, and in many instances devoted themselves afterwards to good works. Everything that he painted has served as a model for later generations."

The statement of the last two paragraphs may seem more imaginative than truthful, but nothing could serve better to illustrate the fame of the master who to the common people was something of an art-magician. And his fame was hardly lessened by the destruction of most of Wu's temple-paintings

¹ Yang T'ing-kuang was a prominent painter of Buddhist subjects; he is often mentioned in the list of wall-paintings in the temples in *Li-tai ming-hua chi*, III, 4.

during the religious persecutions of 841-845,¹ after that date they were extremely rare, if we may judge by the statements of some of the Sung critics. Su Tung-p'o, who spared no efforts to trace the works of the greatly admired master, mentions only two pictures by Wu, one in Pu-mên ssü in Fêng-hsiang, which he characterizes in a poem (to be quoted in the chapter on Wang Wei), and another in Lung-hsing ssü in Ju-chou (Honan), which was executed in a more delicate manner.²

There was, however, no lack of paintings which passed as works by Wu, as testified by Mi Fei, who wrote that although he had seen only four authentic works by the master (all with Buddhist motifs), he was acquainted with a great number of paintings honoured with the master's name. His remarks are as usual not quite consistent and perhaps somewhat exaggerated, but are full of critical acumen and worth quoting in part. The following quotations from *Hua Shih* may be of interest:

"The picture representing the Heavenly Kings (T'ien wang) in the house of Li Kung-lin (Po-shih) is beautiful and refined, yet weak and lacking in style of life (life-breath). It is the work of a follower (of Wu). The same is true of most pictures ascribed to Wu in noblemen's collections.

"The Fairyland, or Isle of the Blessed (*T'ieh p'eng*), in the collection of Chao Ling-jiang (T'annien), is a genuine picture by Wu Tao-tzū.

"The picture representing The Great Compassion (*Ta-pei*, i.e. Kuanyin Bodhisattva) in the collection of Chou T'ung (Jên-shou) is also genuine. When people nowadays get hold of a picture of Buddha, they call it a Wu Tao-tzū, but I have never seen a genuine one (among these). The T'ang artists regarded the work of Wu as a 'complete musical performance',³ and they used his faces as models. Consequently their works became much alike, and it is very difficult to identify them with certainty. My hair is already turning white, but I have never seen more than four genuine paintings (by Wu)."

Beside the two pictures noted above, Mi Fei mentions, however, three more, two of which seem

to have formed a pair; they represented The Heavenly King (T'ien wang). "They belong to Wang Fang (Yüan-kuei) and both are paintings by Wu Tao-tzū of the highest (or divine) class." They were executed with masterly brush-strokes in strong relief.

In addition to these Mi Fei mentions a picture by Wu Tao-tzū in the collection of Su Tung-p'o representing Buddha with more than ten attendants. "It is very damaged but when one stands in front of it, the picture fascinates by its colouring." It was executed without black outlines, and the effect was extremely life-like.

There was evidently no lack of paintings in the Sung period honoured with the name of Wu Tao-tzū, but since his numerous wall-paintings had been destroyed, Mi Fei's opinion, as stated above, was probably not very far from the truth. Nevertheless, more than fifty items are classified under Wu Tao-tzū's name in *Hsüan-ho hua-p'u* and in addition to these there are more than one hundred in later books.⁴

But none of these seems to have survived, not

¹ The religious persecutions ordered by the emperor Wu-tsung (841-859), who was a fanatic Taoist, were mainly directed against the Buddhists but also against the adherents of other faiths, such as Nestorian Christianity, Manichaeism and Mazdeism, and intended to break the wealth and influence of the monastic orders. The ruthless destruction of property, buildings and works of art was more complete than ever before on similar occasions, and as Wu Tao-tzū's pictorial *œuvre* to a large extent consisted of Buddhist wall-paintings, most of it perished during these fateful years. Some idea of the extent of this loss may still be obtained from the chapter in *Li-tai ming-hua chi* devoted to "The Wall-paintings in the Buddhist and Taoist Temples" which was composed only two or three years after the above-mentioned destruction. The author, Chang Yen-yüan, must have had occasion to follow the events from personal observation, and in the introductory lines he notes that although most of the wall-paintings had been destroyed at the time of his writing, fragments could be seen in the possession of some art-lovers. His list contains no descriptive account of the paintings, it consists simply of an enumeration of the names of the temples and the motifs of the paintings, but in spite of this meagreness it has a considerable interest and is therefore communicated as an appendix to this chapter in a condensed translation.

² Su Tung-p'o, *Shih chi*, vol. IV.

³ Allusion to the words by Mencius, Book V, part II, Chapters 1-6, where Confucius is compared to "a complete concert".

⁴ Cf. Ferguson, *Li-tai chu-lu hua-mu*, vol. I, 1, 101-104.



FIGURE 16. Rubbing of a stone engraving of a design by Wu Tao-tzū representing The Black Warrior of the North.

even in copies of such merit that they could pass as substitutes for lost originals. The most faithful and interesting reproductions of Wu's compositions are probably certain stone engravings, which have become known through rubbings in black and white or red and white. They are, as a rule, not disfigured by any additions or arbitrary pigments and may thus (in the best instances) give a better idea of Wu's designs and manner of drawing than painted copies of doubtful date (Fig. 18).

Most popular among these engravings after Wu's designs are the representations of Kuanyin, the merciful Bodhisattva, a motif that Wu treated repeatedly in wall-paintings as well as in scrolls. There are three or four variations of this figure engraved on slabs in the Pei-lin in Sian besides a few others known through rubbings or painted copies. In most of these the Bodhisattva is represented standing on billowing waters, wearing a long mantle which is blown by the wind, so that the folds take on the same movement as the waves, and crowned with a high diadem. In some of the later renderings she is accompanied by a small boy attendant, the so-called Shan Ts'ai, or by her two acolytes,¹ as also may be seen in the rather strange picture of Kuanyin with the Fish-basket, which may be a free transposition of Wu's design. The same is true of some other Kuanyin pictures in which the Bodhisattva is seated on a balustraded platform rising out of a lotus pond surrounded by flowering shrubs and bamboo. The well-balanced composition is possibly based on a design by the great master, but the versions of it which have come under my observation (in the Metropolitan Museum, New York, and in a private collection in Paris) were apparently not executed before the Yüan or early Ming period (Fig. 19).

A different compositional type, likewise traditionally attributed to Wu Tao-tzu, shows the Bodhisattva seated on a cliff by a seashore and some worshippers standing at her feet. It is known through two versions in Daitokuji in Kyoto, both remarkable for their elegant execution and decorative effect. The smaller of the two is commonly described as a

Japanese painting, while the larger and more important one has been classified as a Chinese picture from the latter part of the Sung or the Yüan period. Like so many other Buddhist paintings in Japan of approximately the same date, based on more or less famous designs, it does not show a very definite stylistic character. The Bodhisattva in a gold embroidered white garment is sitting in the *lalitasana* posture and there is an impressive note of hieratic grandeur about her, heightened by the two large circles forming the halo around the head and a nimbus around the body. At the feet of the Bodhisattva are a number of realistically treated figures clinging to the lotus-leaves on the water.

Another group of stone-engravings said to be after the master's designs consists of idealized images of Confucius, of which the most famous is in the memorial temple at Ch'ü-fu. In the Pei-lin at Sian there is a minor representation of Confucius and his pupil Yen-tzu walking side by side. The former is a highly impressive rendering of a venerable Chinese sage, i.e. a type rather than an individual.

The British Museum possesses a remarkable rubbing of an engraved stone said to exist at Ch'eng-tu in Szechuan, representing a big tortoise encircled by a snake, her male counterpart in Chinese mythology and known as the Dark Warrior of the North. It bears Wu Tao-tzu's name, and it may well be said that the motif here is treated with a combination of plastic form and ornamental beauty worthy of a great master.

Another interesting stone-engraving, which reproduces a design by Wu rather faithfully, is the Flying Devil on the wall of the terrace in front of Tung-yüeh miao (or Tao-wang tien) in Ch'ü-yang (Pl. 88). This bounding devil-like guardian, leaping through the air with a spear on his shoulder while the wind drives his clothes and hair into long

¹ Engravings after Wu Tao-tzu's Kuanyin standing on the waves are to be found in Ling-feng ssü at San-t'ai hsien in Szechuan (dated 1591) and at T'ai-shih ko, likewise in Szechuan. A third one was in the Ch'ung-shêng temple at Ts'ü-fu, Yünnan, acc. to Laufer in *Oriental. Zeitschr.*, vol. I, p. 39. The rubbing here reproduced is from an engraving at Lin-lao shan.

fluttering pennants, is permeated with that peculiar whirling movement which, to judge by the old descriptions of his works, must have been one of the most characteristic features of Wu's manner. The figure is repeated in two engravings, one on each side of the broad staircase which leads up to the terrace. The older one, on the west side, may be of the seventeenth century; it bears the following inscription: "Wu Tao-tzu's brush. The magistrate Chao Tai from Tung-lu (Shantung) had this stone engraved. Po Hsing, a spirit of the Hêng Mountain, flying down like a white devil with a spear. Swift as the wind he descends from the clouds to kill and to strike, an agent of Heaven, who deals out punishment and clears up secrets, so that the country and the people may be peaceful for ever." There is an additional inscription of similar contents written by a magistrate of Ch'ü-yang.

The engraving on the opposite side of the staircase was executed in 1847, when the earlier one had begun to show signs of deterioration, but the design seems to be copied from one of the figures in the great wall-painting in the main hall of the temple which is also traditionally ascribed to Wu. It represents a Heavenly King with a long retinue descending on clouds, and may be a free rendering of a composition by Wu.

Several other pictures traditionally honoured with the name of Wu Tao-tzu might be mentioned here, but none of them can be said to have more than a distant connexion with the master. Most famous among the Buddhist pictures is the triptych in Tofukuji in Kyoto, representing Śakyamuni between the Bodhisattvas Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra. The figures are impressive owing to their large size and a certain boldness in the brush-work which, however, does not reveal a great master's hand. The technical method with its combination of ink and ornaments in gold indicates that the pictures were executed in Japan, probably in the fourteenth century, and not in China.

Another temple-picture in Japan that may be mentioned here has served as the centre-piece in a

smaller triptych belonging to Koto-in in Daitokuji in Kyoto. It is a male version of Kuanyin with moustache and diadem, clad in a long wavy garment, while the side-pieces are two excellent landscapes, nowadays recognized as works by Li T'ang, which will occupy us in a later chapter. The centre-piece is probably a picture of the same period (*i.e.* early twelfth century), though executed after a sort of Wu Tao-tzu design, discernible in the characterization of the Bodhisattva as a man and in the billowing folds of the long garment. It seems to reflect the idea of Wu Tao-tzu's style that was prevalent in the late Sung and Yüan periods.

Other pictures honoured with the master's name which have come under my observation seem to be of later origin, even though they may represent his compositions at least in part. The best known among these is the handscroll in the former Abe collection (now in the Osaka Museum) representing certain miraculous events in connexion with the birth and presentation of the last human Buddha (*T'ien Wang Sung Tzu*). The fantastic interpretation of the motif, in which Hindu divinities, such as Shiva and the Heavenly Ruler, take prominent places beside King Suddhodana and Maya, the mother of Śakyamuni, may be derived from some painting by Wu Tao-tzu, but the actual execution reveals no traces of the lion's mettle. The lines may have something of the wavy quality that was significant of Wu's style, but it is more fluent, in a calligraphic sense, than expressive of strength or vitality. Such a thing could hardly have been painted before the Yüan-Ming period, an impression also confirmed by some of the female types (Pls. 86, 87).

Problems of a corresponding nature are offered by the fifty large ink drawings, united in an album,¹ now in Mr. Junkung's collection in Chicago, which according to an inscription of 1809 are masterpieces by Wu Tao-tzu. Half the number of these drawings

¹ This album of fifty drawings was published in full size facsimile reproductions under the title: *Zeichnungen nach Wu Tao-tzu aus der Götter und Sagenwelt Chinas*, Herausgegeben von F. R. Martin, München 1913.



FIGURE 17. Rubbing of a stone engraving after Wu Tao-tzu's Guanyin at Lin-lao shan.

represent so-called T'ien Wang, *i.e.* Heavenly Rulers of various kinds, most of them in full armour, standing on rolling clouds, whereas an almost equal number illustrate Scenes from Hell, in which human sinners are brought before Yen-lo wang, the judge of the dead, to receive their sentences and punishment. Compositions of this kind formerly enjoyed great popularity in China and could be seen in Taoist as well as Buddhist temples and, if I remember rightly, some of these were honoured with the name of Wu Tao-tzū, even though executed only in the Ming period. No name has been more tenaciously connected with religious paintings in China. The drawings, which are done by a very able draughtsman, may indeed have served as preparatory studies for wall-paintings, and their highly-finished character makes it quite probable that they were copied after earlier models. To what extent these represented Wu's style and brush-work is not for us to decide, but they may indeed have contained elements of his art which the master of these drawings also retained and transmitted with his subtle brush. Their historical interest is based mainly on the typical character of the compositions and not dependent on the period of execution.

The earliest description of Wu's manner of painting is offered by Chang Yen-yüan in his "Discussion of the Brush-manner of Ku K'ai-chih, Lu T'an-wei, Chang Sêng-yu and Wu Tao-hsüan" in *Li-tai ming-hua chi* (Chapt.II). It has served as a guide and basis for the discussions of the same subject by later writers and may therefore, in so far as it refers to Wu, be quoted here in translation:

"Wu Tao-hsüan of the present dynasty stood above all others of ancient and modern times. Among his predecessors not even Ku (K'ai-chih) and Lu T'an-wei can be considered his equals, and after him there have been no successors. He learned his brush-method from Chang Hsü; and from this it may again be realized that the use of the brush is the same in writing and painting. As Chang was nicknamed the Crazy Calligraphist, Wu should be called the Sage of Painting. When a man avails himself of the

creative power of Heaven, there is no limit to his genius.

"While common people fix their attention on the (complete) outlines, he split and scattered the dots and strokes, and while others observe the likeness of the shapes most carefully, he did not consider such vulgar points. In painting curves, lines straight as a lance(?), standing pillars and connecting beams, Wu did not make use of ruler or foot-measure. He painted the curly beard and the foot-long tufts waving and fluttering at the temples (of the figures) with such an excess of strength that the hairs were detaching themselves from the flesh. He must have been in possession of a great secret, which no one now understands. He could start a picture, some eight feet high, either from the arms or from the feet, and then make of it a strange and marvellous figure with blood circulating under the skin, surpassing by such Chang Sêng-yu.

"Someone asked me: 'How is it possible that Master Wu could draw curves and arcs, lines straight as a lance, without using ruler and foot-measure?' To which I answered: 'He held fast to the spirit and concentrated on it, blending (himself) with the creative forces of Nature, which seemed to work through Master Wu's brush'. As said before, the ideas were present before the brush; when the picture was finished it contained them all.

"Is not this true of everything when it reaches perfection and not only of painting? Thus worked the carver, whose knife seemed always fresh from the whetstone,¹ and the stone mason from Ying,² who knew how to wield the axe. But she who imitated the knitted eyebrows³ beat the breast in vain, and he who chops the meat (instead of cutting)

¹ Prince Hui's cook who kept his chopper for nineteen years as though fresh from the whetstone because he knew how to work in accordance with Tao or the laws of Nature. *Cf.* Giles, *Chuang Tzū*, p.34 (1926).

² A man from Ying who had his nose covered with a hard scab, no thicker than a fly's wing, sent for a stone mason, who chopped it off without hurting the nose. Giles, *Chuang Tzū*, p.321.

³ The famous beauty Hsi-shih knitted her brows. An ugly woman tried to imitate her; the result was that everybody fled from her. Giles, *Chuang Tzū*, p.182.

will wound his hands. His thoughts are confused and he is the slave of exterior things; how could such a person draw a circle with his left hand while painting a square with his right hand? Whoever does this with the help of ruler and foot-measure produces a dead picture, while he who holds fast to the spirit and concentrates on it produces a true picture. Dead pictures covering a wall are worse than common plaster. A single stroke of real painting reveals the breath of life.

"He who ponders in thought and moves the brush intent upon doing a picture misses still more (the more he tries) the art of painting, while he who cogitates and moves his brush without any intention, attains the art of painting. His hands do not get stiff, his heart does not congeal and without knowing how, he accomplishes it. Though making curves and arcs, lines straight as lances, standing pillars and connecting beams, what use has he for ruler and foot-measure?

"My interrogator said furthermore: "Those who ponder in thought deeply and carefully make pictures which are refined and thorough, but what about those who work in a less complete fashion?

"To this I answered: 'Ku's and Lu's divine quality cannot be observed in the outlines, yet their brush-work is thorough and fine. The wonderful art of Chang (Sêng-yü) and Wu (Tao-tzū) is to complete the picture with one or two strokes. The splitting and scattering of the dots and strokes make their pictures seem quite rough and loose, and their brush-work not thorough, yet they expressed the ideas completely. You must know that there are two kinds of painting, *shu* (i.e. scattering and open) and *mi* (i.e. fine and dense). When you know this, you can discuss painting.' My interrogator nodded and went away."

Chang Yen-yüan's characterization of Wu Tao-tzū's genius is further elaborated by critics of the Sung period, such as Kuo Jo-hsü, Su Tung-p'o, and Tung Yu, and these critics, who still had some opportunity of seeing genuine works by the master, sometimes refer to more definite individual features

which serve to give us a clearer idea of Wu's artistic personality. The following inscription by Su Tung-p'o on a picture by Wu,¹ is in this respect pertinent:

"The men who possessed knowledge, invented things. Those who were skilful transmitted them; it was not all done by one man. The scholars promoted it (i.e. culture) by their study, and the workmen by their skill. The evolution went on from the (ancient) Three Dynasties through the Han up to the T'ang period. Thus poetry was perfected by Tu Fu, literature by Han Yü, calligraphy by Yen Lu-kung² and painting by Wu Tao-tzū. All the efforts of ancient and modern times were brought to completion by these men.

"Tao-tzū painted his figures like shadows produced by a lamp. They moved forward and inward; when seen from the side, they seemed to be leaning out. When placed behind each other (criss-cross), they formed an even plane and by relative increase and decrease each one received its natural degree (shape). Not the least detail was wrong.

"He formed new rules of calculation in art and followed mysterious principles even in his most impassioned works, as expressed by the saying: 'Room for the blade to move and to spate;³ the rotations of the hatchet make the wind'. He was really unique among ancient and modern painters.

"I may not feel quite certain about the manners of other painters, but when I see a picture by Wu Tao-tzū I know at a glance whether it is genuine or not. But nowadays there are very few genuine ones. During my whole life I have only once or twice seen one like those in the possession of Shih Ch'uan-shu." (Written in 1085 by Su Tung-p'o.)

Su Tung-p'o's description of Wu Tao-tzū's style

¹ Tung-p'o *ch'üan-chi*, vol. 70.

² Yen Chên-ch'ing (709-785), the great statesman and patriot known for his opposition to An Lu-shan and his tempestuous career, he was also one of the greatest calligraphists of the time.

³ Cf. Giles, Dictionary, No. 13423. "The expression is used of a person whose works seem a mere child's play to him." It refers to Chuang-tzū's story about Prince Hui's marvellous cook, previously mentioned.

makes us realize that the great admiration evoked by the master's works did not depend simply on his impetuous way of wielding the brush, but also on the fact that he had mastered certain means of representing space, movement and cubic volume in a hitherto unknown degree. His pictures must have possessed an extraordinary power of illusion in regard to form as well as to movement. The figures moved in them freely in every direction, and when they stood behind each other there was no crowding; they seemed to recede into the background as naturally as if they had been spread over a perfectly horizontal plane. The third dimension was rendered in a more convincing way than by the earlier masters, and the figures were distinguished by a remarkable degree of cubic form.

This quality of Wu's painted figures is also praised in some writings by Tung Yu, who furthermore gives the most concise description of his firm structural drawing and incessantly curving and bending brush-strokes:¹ "Wu's paintings are like clay sculptures. His figures have projecting chins, large curving noses, prominent eyes and sunken faces. It cannot be said that he used the ink thickly, yet the faces and the eyes look quite real, not otherwise than in clay sculptures. In ordinary paintings these parts are usually put on with thick layers of colour, but the eyes, the nose, the cheek-bones and the forehead are not separated.

"Yang Hui-chih and Wu Tao-tzū both came to the fore in the K'ai-yüan era (713-742), but the former did not succeed in his studies; consequently he changed from painting to clay sculpture. He found it easier to make sculptures in clay, which he coloured, than to execute paintings on silk, which is more difficult. Wu painted his figures like clay sculptures; they could be seen from all sides, in the round, good on all four sides. The strokes of his brush are curving and as fine as coiling copper wire. However thick the colours may be, one can always perceive the bony structure and the modelling of the flesh underneath. All the different parts are properly rendered. As I was afraid that the beholder would

not be able to find it out for himself, I have added this about the colouring. The present picture has quite small figures, but the *ch'i-yün* is exceedingly bold and free."

The relation between Wu's paintings and contemporary sculpture was evidently a point that aroused special interest among the critics. He is said to have himself executed figures in clay, and among his associates and pupils were some who turned to sculpture when they did not succeed as painters. Chang Yen-yüan mentions not only Yang Hui-chih, but also other pupils such as Chang Ai-erh, Yüan Ming and Ch'eng Chin, who also became known for their works in clay and stone.² None of their works has been identified, but among still existing Buddhist sculptures may be observed figures which by their virile types and the manner in which the billowing mantle folds are arranged, remind us of the rubbings of Wu Tao-tzū's designs.³

It may also be remembered that there are still examples of stone reliefs made after drawings by Wu Tao-tzū, as for instance a Kuan-yin with a willow-branch seated by the seashore, represented within a circular field on a stone slab (in the Freer Gallery). According to the inscription it was made by a man called Wei-min from Po-yang in the year 1107, after a work by Wu Tao-tzū.

Wu's extraordinary qualities as a figure painter are thus more or less made tangible through the descriptions of the old critics and through some of the rubbings of his engraved designs. But as to his landscapes we have no information whatsoever that would make it possible to form an idea beyond pure conjectures. Chang Yen-yüan (as quoted in a preceding chapter) says that he formed a style of his own in landscape painting, but gives no indication of its special merits. In his "Discussion of Landscape-painting" he writes: "Wu Tao-hsüan was endowed

¹ *Kuang-ch'uan hua-po*, IV, 1, 95.

² *Li-tai ming-jua chi*, Chap. X: at the end of the notes on Wu. Cf. Pelliot, *Notes sur quelques artistes*, etc. *T'oung Pao*, 1923, pp. 72, 73.

³ Cf. *A History of Early Chinese Art*, iii (Sculpture), Pls. 83, 85, 86, 87.

by Heaven with a vigorous brush. From his youth up he harboured a mysterious spirit. He often painted strange stones and crumbling river banks on the walls of the temples in a free manner, so that one could feel them with the hand. He also went to Shu to paint some landscapes. This was the beginning of a change in landscape painting. It started with Wu and was further accomplished by the two Li."

The combination of Wu with the two Li whose activities belonged to a somewhat earlier epoch, deprives the passage of most of its historical value, but Chang Yen-yüan may have felt that Wu's masterly way of representing stones and other things of nature as almost free-standing and convincingly real could offer a good reason also for proclaiming him too as a forerunner in landscape-painting, even though somewhat later than Li Ssü-hsün. The two masters represented different attitudes – the one transposing nature into legendary illustrations, the other recasting it with expressionistic freedom into compositions of monumental sweep – but both exercised a decisive influence on the following evolution.

Wu's productivity must have been enormous, and it greatly impressed his contemporaries. To us it becomes evident through the literary records and particularly through the long list of the wall-paintings which he executed in the Taoist and Buddhist temples in the two capitals. They were not only numerous but also extensive, i.e. compositions spread over large wall-spaces, probably executed with the help of a number of assistants who, as told by Chang Yen-yüan, filled out the designs with colours and ornamental details and thereby often spoiled them. Chang mentions some of them in an additional paragraph to the life of Wu as follows:

"When Wu was doing some large paintings he often simply started the work and then went away, leaving it to Chai Yen and Chang Ts'ang to finish it with colours, i.e. the thick and the thin (the light and heavy tones), which they did correctly".

These two seem to have been Wu's most trusted assistants and highly trained. Chang reports about

Chang Ts'ang: "His designs were somewhat rough and sketchy, but his thoughts were like bubbling wells. He could cover the walls of ten temple halls within ten days, but in regard to the Six Principles, he was much below his teacher."

Another interesting pupil of Wu mentioned by Chang was Lu Lêng-chia. "His works were like those of Wu but his talent and strength were more limited. He could paint quite well in a fine manner, representing within a square foot a vast landscape with many clear and distinguished figures. He specialized in Buddhist sūtra paintings.

"When Wu painted over some gates in Tsung-ch'ih ssü in the capital he received a great reward. Lu Lêng-chia (who knew this) did some paintings secretly over three gates in Chuang-yen ssü, exerting himself to the utmost, and thus accomplishing something wonderful. One day master Wu happened to see the pictures and was greatly impressed by them. He said: 'The strength of this man's brush was as a rule not as good as mine, but here he is of the same class as myself; he has really put his whole soul into it'. A month later, Lêng-chia passed away."

Lu Lêng-chia's name is also attached to some interesting minor paintings of Arhats, which by their designs illustrate the Wu Tao-tzū tradition even though probably executed later. The pictures formed parts of an album, containing originally sixteen Arhat paintings, which a few years ago was found under the cushion of a throne seat, in the Peking palace. Most of the leaves of this album were practically destroyed by mildew, only three of them could be exhibited in T'ai-ho tien, and these too are far from well preserved (Pl.89).

The Arhats are not represented isolated, but accompanied by one or two servants and receiving the homage of worshippers or exercising their superhuman faculties in taming the dragon or other animals. Each picture has a strongly emphasized dramatic purport brought out by the contraposition of the powerful Chinese-looking Arhats and the Khotanese or Indian worshippers represented on a minor scale. Whether seated, kneeling or moving,

they all express a state of emotional tension or control which contributes to make these small pictures truly significant as illustrations, but a closer examination of the brush-work gave me the impression that they probably had been executed in the Sung rather than in the T'ang period.

* * *

These few notes about pupils of Wu may be sufficient. To follow further the influence of his art, the imitations of his compositions and his technical manner, would carry us not only to the very end of the T'ang but far into the Sung and Yüan periods. We shall have occasion to observe some of this influence in the works of a few later painters. But to

say just how closely any of them actually succeeded in imitating master Wu is no longer possible. His works perished, but the traditions about his creative vigour, the compelling strength of his brush and inexhaustible *ch'i yün* became a vital current in Chinese painting. He imparted a new meaning to the traditional motifs, painting with equal success Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, Taoist Immortals, dragons and devils, portraits and landscapes, making them all live, because he knew how to blend his own creative force with that of Heaven, to use the words of Chang Yen-yüan. Painting was to him an act of magic, like great music, or great poetry; the brush a tool by which the fire of the gods could be brought down to earth.

APPENDIX TO THE CHAPTER ON WU TAO-TZÜ

A CONDENSED translation of Chapt. III, 4, in *Li-tai ming-hua chi* which is called "Notes on Wall-paintings in the Buddhist and Taoist Temples of the Two Capitals". It contains information not only about a large number of Wu Tao-tzü's wall-paintings, but also regarding similar works by contemporary and earlier painters partly mentioned elsewhere in this book.

It has not been possible to include here any critical notes or commentary to the succinct records of Chang Yen-yüan, but students who are interested in this source material and its implications will find excellent historical and linguistic commentaries to the text in William R. B. Acker's volume *Some T'ang and Pre-T'ang Texts on Chinese Painting* (Leiden 1954). My translation, made several years ago, has been amended in some places with the help of Acker's interpretations, but I have left out many details in regard to the buildings and the location of the paintings which no longer have any importance for the identification or description of the picture. When Chang Yen-yüan composed his list (849) most of the temples and their paintings had already been destroyed (845); he wrote from memory and with the support of older accounts such as P'ei Hsiao-yüan's *Hua Lu*, and some of his local indications are far from clear, but the information that he contributes regarding the works of Wu Tao-tzü and some contemporaries seems to warrant the inclusion of the following list:

PART I: THE WESTERN CAPITAL, CH'ANG-AN
T'ai-ch'ing kung. In the hall, a portrait of Lao-tzü, on silk, by Wu Tao-tzü.

Chien-fu ssü. At both sides of the gate of *Ching-t'u yüan*. Pure Land precinct pictures by Wu representing divinities and demons. On the south side, a dragon above the head of a divinity. It is wonderful.

In the *P'u-t'i yüan* of the Western cloister a Vimalakirti by Wu.

In the *Lü yüan* (Vinaya court) of the northern cloister. Paintings by Chang Tsao and Pi Hung.

Paintings on the east wall within the Buddha Hall and the circumambulating monks under the portico, are unfinished works by Wu.

Hsing-shan ssü. Wall-paintings in the hall. According to P'ei Hsiao-yüan's *Hua Lu* they are painted by Liu Yen; which is probably right.

On its southwest, *She-li* Pagoda. Pictures by Ts'ao, and on the west wall, pictures by Yin Lin.

The third court on the east. Pictures by Wu representing divinities; damaged in mounting.

San-tsang yüan. (The Tripitaka Court) Wonderful pictures; the name of the painter is lost.

Tz'u-ên ssü. In the pagoda, pictures by Yin Lin. On the west wall, a Bodhisattva seated on a lion (Mañjuśrī). On the east wall, a Bodhisattva seated on an elephant (Samantabhadra).

Pagoda, ground floor. In the southern gate under the pagoda paintings by Wei-ch'ih I-sêng. The painting on the western wall represents Mañjuśrī, likewise by Wei-ch'ih I-sêng.

On the northern and southern gates and the adjoining walls pictures by Wu, with inscriptions by him.

The hall north of the pagoda, between the windows, a Bodhisattva by Wu.

Scenes from a sūtra painted by Yang T'ing-kuang; the colours are damaged.

Main hall; north wall of the eastern portico, an unfinished painting. According to tradition it is by Wu, but if one looks at it carefully, this does not appear to be correct.

First court to the east of the main hall. Pictures by Chêng Ch'ien, Pi Hung and Wang Wei in outline (*pai hua*).

Courtyard; north wall, a picture of two spirits, very fine but the name of the painter has been lost.

On the wall spaces of two side-cloisters paintings by Yen (Li-pên). In the western cloister paintings of circumambulating monks by Li Kuo-nu.

South-east of the pagoda, outside middle gate, scenes from hell by Chang Hsiao-shih. The colours are falling off. Pine-trees by Wei Luan.

Great Buddha Hall, on the east wall, fine paintings, but painter's name lost.

On the sides of the triple gate, pictures by Yin Lin representing divinities.

Lung-hsing kuan. Pictures within the main entrance by Wu representing divinities. They are beginning to fall off.

In the main hall, on the east wall, scenes from the *Ming-chên Sūtra* by Wu.

On the second gate at the north side, pictures in *pai hua* by Tung O.

T'ang-an ssü. At the bottom of the pagoda, pictures by Yin Lin and Li Chên.

In the hall, on the west wall, a landscape by Chu Shen.

Kuang-chai ssü. In the eastern Buddha Court. Wall-pictures by Wei-ch'ih I-sêng, representing descending demons and others.

In the main hall. Pictures by Wu, Yang T'ing-kuang; also Yin Lin's painting representing the Western Paradise.

Hsüan-chên kuan. In the hall, on the throne of Hsüan

Yüan (Lao-tzü) divinities by Ch'ên Ching-hsin. Other pictures inside and outside the hall by Ch'êng Ya and Ch'ên Ching-hsin.

Tzu-shêng ssü. East of the central triple gate, between the windows, paintings by T'an Chang.

On the north and south side of the central triple gate, portraits of prominent monks by Wu.

On the east and south walls by the triple gate, scenes from sūtras by Yao Ching-hsien.

On the outside wall of the western court, scenes from sūtras by Yang T'ing-kuang.

In the *Pei-yüan* pagoda, Bodhisattvas painted on silk by Li Chên and Yin Lin.

Pao-ch'ü ssü. South side of the Buddha Hall, pictures by Yang Ch'ü-tan, representing Buddha's Nirvāṇa. (According to P'ei's *Hua Lu*, there were also paintings by Chêng Fa-shih, but no more to be seen.) In the western portico, pictures of hell by Ch'ên Ching-yen and also pictures by Yang T'ing-kuang.

Hsing-t'ang ssü. Beneath the tower of the triple gate, pictures of divinities by Wu.

Eastern *P'an-fo yüan*, landscape by Yang T'ing-kuang and other paintings by him.

In the western courtyard, a portrait of the Great Master I-hsing by Han Kan, with a eulogy by Hsü Hao. Also pictures on silk by Wu and Chou Fang. Inside the middle triple gate, wall-pictures by Wei-ch'ih I-sêng.

In the galleries on the east side of the hall, wall-pictures by Wu.

Ching-t'u yüan. Pictures by Tung O, Yin Lin, Yang Yüan and Yang Ch'iao.

In the courtyard, etc., wall-paintings by Wu, representing scenes from the *Chin-kang* ("Diamond") sūtra, spoiled by workmen who put on the colour.

In the southern portico, a scene from the *Chin-kang* sūtra as well as portrait of the empress Hsi, and others painted by Wu, with his inscription.

In the small hall are wall-paintings by Wu representing Bodhisattvas Indra and Sukhavatī (the "West").

In the south-eastern corner, scenes from the *Chin-kang* sūtra painted by Li Shêng, a pupil of Wu.

In the Lecture Hall, pictures by Yang T'ing-kuang.

P'u-t'i ssü. In the Buddha Hall, on the east and west walls, pictures representing divinities and demons by Wu; the western wall was coloured by workmen and

spoilt. Also plain pictures *pai hua* by Yang T'ing-kuang.

On the north, east and west walls of the main hall, paintings by Wu. On the east wall there is a Bodhisattva who turns his eyes to look at people . . . also spoiled when coloured by artisans.

On the east wall, a painting by Tung O, representing scenes of former lives.

On the balustrade of this hall, pictures of aquatic animals by K'eng Ch'ang-yen.

Within this Buddha Hall, on the east wall, is also a painting by Yang T'ing-kuang. According to the *Hsi-ching chi*, there were also paintings by Ch'eng Fa-shih, but they have now disappeared.

Wan-an kuan. On the north wall, etc. a landscape by Li Chao-tao.

Ching-yü ssü. According to P'ei Hsia-yüan's *Hua Lu*, there were paintings by Sun Shang-tzu, but they are no more to be seen.

San-chieh yüan. On the east wall of the San-chieh yüan are scenes from hell by Chang Hsiao-shih, and a tablet with inscription by Tu Huai-liang.

Inside and outside the gate, pictures representing divinities and demons by Wang Shao-ying, the inscription on the board by Wang Shih.

Ching-kung ssü. Eastern cloister corridor, south wall, a row of monks who turn their eyes to look at people.

East of the middle gate, a picture of hell painted by Wu, with his inscription.

Inside the western gate, on the west wall, a picture representing Indra, by Wu, with his inscription. In the southern portico, are (more) pictures by Wu.

Inside the triple gate, on the east and west walls, wonderful pictures, but artist's name has been lost.

Ch'ing-lung ssü. In the courtyard, outside the triple gate, east and west wall-paintings by Wang Shao-ying.

An-kuo ssü. In the courtyard, two wall-paintings representing divinities by Wu; also wall-paintings of the emperor Wu of Liang and his empress Hsi, by Wu, with his inscriptions.

Inside and outside the small hall of *Ching-yüan*, wall-paintings by Wu.

In the first courtyard; at the western cloister . . . wall-paintings representing Brahman and Indra by Yang T'ing-kuang.

The Indra pictures to the east and west of the triple gate by Wu; were spoiled by the workmen who coloured them.

In the pagoda in the courtyard of the Dharma Master, beyond and the east portico, pictures by Wei-ch'ih I-sêng and Wu.

In the Buddha Hall two divinities on the east and west walls painted by Wu; spoiled by workmen who applied the colours.

In the Buddha Hall a scene of Wei-mo (Vimalakirti), by Wu.

At the north-eastern corner, a representation of Buddha's Nirvāṇa by Yang T'ing-kuang.

On the west wall, a picture of "The Western Region", by Wu, spoiled by the workmen who coloured it.

On the south wall, a picture representing Buddha, by Wu; lightly coloured.

K'ai-yuan kuan. Wall-paintings illustrating the *Lung-hu chün ming-chên sūtra*, all by Yang T'ing-kuang. Above and below the western windows, pictures by Yang Hsien-ch'iao.

Yün-hua ssü. In the small Buddha Hall pictures representing the "Pure Land" (*Ch'ing-lu*) by Chao Wu-tuan.

Above the gate to the northern courtyard, a wall-painting by Wang Chih-shên.

Pao-ying ssü. Many pictures by Han Kan, most of them in *pai hua*, some lightly coloured.

In the Buddha Hall on the east and west sides Bodhisattvas painted by Han Kan. They were spoiled by workmen who coloured them.

In the small hall of the south-western courtyard, landscapes by Chang Tsao.

Outside the southern gate of the south-western courtyard, a Vaiśravaṇa devaraja painted by Han Kan.

In the courtyard at the foot of the western pagoda, Peonies painted by Pien Luan.

Hsien-i kuan. Two wall pictures at the triple gate and the pictures in the eastern and western porticos, by Wu. In the main hall, between the windows, pictures of Taoist immortals by Wu.

In front of the hall, the two divinities in the east and west by Chieh Ch'ien. Courtyard in front of the main hall. Wall-paintings representing divinities by Wu and Yang T'ing-kuang. Wall-paintings between the windows, and portraits of the emperor Ming-huang

(of Tang) and of princesses on their way to worship Buddha, by Ch'ên Hung.

Yung-shou ssü. Within the triple gate, wall-paintings representing divinities, by Wu.

Ch'ien-fu ssü. The name on the frontal tablet was written by the Court-lady Chao-jung. There were two stone tablets outside the triple gate; one containing the *Shêng chiao hsü*, composed by the emperor T'ai Tsung, written in the style of Wang Hsi-chih; the other was called *Fa-hua kan-ying*, and the writing was by Yen Lu-kung.

In the precinct of the eastern pagoda, Buddha's Nirvāṇa and demons and divinities painted by Yang Hui-chih. Inside and outside the gate and on the wall paintings in black and white of demons and divinities by Yang T'ing-kuang.

Precinct of the western pagoda, a frontal tablet written by the emperor Hsüan-tsung (713-742).

In the northern gallery, portraits of the great Ch'an master Nan-yüeh Chih-i, seven patriarchs of the Fa-hua school, and their disciples, etc., probably by Han Kan. In the pagoda, along the staircase were portraits of the Twenty-four Disciples, probably by Han Kan and Lu Lêng-chia. Inside the pagoda, pictures of divinities by Wu. North of the pagoda, pictures representing the Bodhisattva P'u-hsien (Samantabhadra), demons and divinities which look like works by Yin Lin, but according to tradition they were by Yang T'ing-kuang. On the gates in the courtyard of the pagoda there are pictures of demons and divinities by Wu, and also an Indra. All very fine. In the western gallery of the pagoda yard, a portrait of the T'ien-shih (the Taoist adept) by Han Kan. The Eastern Pagoda (Tung t'a) was built by the order of the emperor Hsüan-tsung in accordance with his dream.

The portrait of the monk Ch'u-chin, by Wu. A scene of Maitreya descending into incarnation, by Han Kan. (Enumeration of a number of stone tablets and some secondary paintings.)

Ch'ung-fu ssü. In the western room are landscapes by Nin Chao and Wang T'o-tzü.

In the pavilion on the Eastern Hill, landscapes by Liu Chêng.

Outside the western gate, wall-paintings by Wu, with his own inscriptions.

Hua-tu ssü. Pictures by Yang T'ing-kuang and Yang Hsien-ch'iao, illustrating the *Fo pên hsing sūtra*. Also scenes from hell by Lu Lêng-chia. Now mostly destroyed.

Wên-kuo ssü. In *Ching-t'u* court, pictures by Yin Lin. Inside the triple gate, demons and divinities by Wu. By the south and north windows divinities; artist's name is lost.

T'ing-shui ssü. A frontal name board, written by Wang Hsi-chih. In the main hall, pictures of two divinities and three figures representing Indra, all by Chang Sêng-yu. They were transported here from Shang-yüan hsien (Kiangsu). Furthermore, seven divinities and the small divinities, all by Hsieh Ch'ien.

In the main hall, on the east wall, a Wei Mo-chi (Vimalakirti) by Sun Shang-tzü. On the screen at the back, copies of old paintings and calligraphies, all excellent.

In the wall spaces at the centre, paintings by Sun Shang-tzü. The pictures on the east wall are not by him, but very fine.

Paintings on the east and west walls and over the gate look as if they were by Chan (Tzū-ch'ien). They are excellent. The halos seem to come out of the wall. The Bodhisattvas between the windows also fine.

Fêng-lên ssü. In the western courtyard outside the triple gate, pictures by Wei-ch'ih I-sêng representing kings and noblemen from his own country.

The small pictures under the pagoda are also by Wei-ch'ih. This monastery was originally the house of Wei-ch'ih I-sêng.

Lung-hsing ssü. In the Buddha Hall are pictures by Chêng Fa-lun.

I-tê ssü. Divinities in the second storey of the great triple gate and scenes from *Hua-yen sūtra* are all very fine. In the corridor to the west of the triple gate are landscapes by Ch'ên Ching-yin.

The pictures in the great hall are excellent, but the artist's name lost.

Shêng-kuang ssü. In the small hall of the north-western courtyard, — pictures of circumambulating monks by Wang Ting, and also a Bodhisattva.

Outside the triple gate, divinities and an Indra by Yang Hsien-ch'iao.

In the southern corridor to the north of the triple gate, pictures by Yin Lin.

In the southeastern courtyard, where the pagoda stood, a picture of Water-Moon-Bamboo-Kuanyin, by Chou Fang. The protecting screen, the bamboo and the halo were finished in colour by Liu Chêng.

Hsi-ming ssü. On the south wall at the western gate, two pictures of divinities by Yang T'ing-kuang. Spoiled in colouring.

To the east of the eastern portico, portraits of Transmitters of the Law (Patriarchs) with eulogies in the handwriting of Chu Sui-liang and Ou-yang Tung.

To the east of the monastery is the wall of Ts'ung-fu ssü, with landscape by Ch'en Chi-shan.

Ching-fa ssü. Behind the main hall, are scenes from hell by Chang Hsiao-shih. On the east wall, picture by Fan Ch'ang-shou; also mentioned in Pei Hsiao-yüan's *Hua Lu*. The picture on the west wall also fine, but the artist's name is lost.

K'ung-kuan ssü. Originally the private chapel of Chou Shih-tsun. The door pictures of the main hall by Yüan Tzu-ang. There are also the so-called Three Excellences, i.e. a peacock and two dragons.

Ch'ung-shêng ssü. In the west hall, pictures by Tung Po-jên.

In the east hall, pictures by Chan Tzu-ch'ien; they are referred to in the *Hua Lu* of P'ei Hsiao-yüan. In the north-western hall, pictures by Chêng Tê-wên.

Hsüan-tu kuan. In the main hall, pictures by Fan Ch'ang-shou.

Hai-chieh ssü. Inside the triple gate, pictures by Wang Shao-ying. In front of the small hall, figures by Tung Po-jên.

To the west of *Shuang-lin* Pagoda, pictures by Chan Tzu-ch'ien. Behind the pagoda, picture said to be by Chêng Fa-shih. Very fine.

North of the gate of the south-western courtyard, wall-picture, divinities wonderfully done. The artist's name lost, but they are said to be by Chêng Fa-shih.

Shou-kuo ssü. In the main hall are some wonderful pictures, but the artist's name lost.

Chi-kuo ssü. In the small hall of the west Ch'an court, pictures by Chêng Fa-lun; much damaged.

Pao-i ssü. At the back of the main hall, ——— paintings which look as if by Wang Ting.

On the west wall of the Buddha Hall is a Nirvāṇa picture by Lu Lêng-chia, with his own inscription.

Within the hall of the western Ch'an court, pictures by Tu Ching-hsiang and Wang Yüan-chih.

Ta-yün ssü. Inside the so-called *Ch'i-pao t'a* pagoda built by the emperor Wen-ti of Sui (589-604), pictures of lean horses, human figures and tents, all painted by Fêng T'i-chia; now much damaged. On the east and north walls, pictures by Chêng Fa-lun. On the west wall, a picture by Tien Sêng-liang.

On the outside walls are pictures by Yang Ch'i-tan, representing the *Pêng-hsing* sūtra, and a pair of "magic eyes" that follow the spectator.

In *San-chieh yüan*, under the window, picture of a desolate landscape with wild animals, which seem to be by Chang Hsiao-shih.

To the south-west, in the *Ching-t'u yüan* some very fine wall-pictures of monks, but artist's name lost.

Yung-t'ai ssü. Main hall and western portico, pictures of Buddhist sages by Li Ya.

Eastern portico, pictures by Yang Ch'i-tan.

In the *vihāra* to the east a picture representing the *mich tu* Nirvāṇa(?) by Chêng Fa-shih.

Tsung-ch'ih ssü. Eastern and western walls outside the gate, paintings by Wu. Spoilt by colouring.

In the Buddha Hall, on the east wall, pictures by Sun Shang-tzu.

In the small Buddha hall of Tripitaka court *San-tung yüan*, four walls of paintings by Yin Lin and Li Ch'ang.

In the chapel, a portrait of the Great Master Ên, by Li Ch'ung-ch'ang.

Chuang-yen ssü. Outside the great south gate, wall-paintings representing foreign divinities, by Yin Lin. Outside the middle gate to the east and west, painting by Lu Lêng-chia.

The walls are very large.

Picture of cranes by the secretary Hsieh Ch'i, with poetic inscription by Ho Chih-chang. Phoenixes by Liang Yü-ling on the pillars of the Calligraphy pavilion. They are uncompleted and not worth looking at. Formerly there were also small landscapes, but they have disappeared. In the middle (office?) hall of the Censors, landscapes by Wu, but judging from the works (of the master) they are not by Wu. Also landscapes by Hsiao Yu, the prefect of Kuei-chou and by Liu Chêng, and in the rear office of the Director of Sacrificial Worship landscapes by Liang Hsia.

Ch'an-ting ssü. According to P'ei Hsiao-yüan's *Hua Lu*, there were pictures by Ch'ên Shan-chien.

Hsi-ch'an ssü. According to P'ei Hsiao-yüan, there were paintings by Sun Shang-tzû.

K'ai-yeh ssü. According to P'ei's *Hua Lu*, there were paintings by Ts'ao Chung-ta, Li Ya, Yang Ch'i-tan and Chêng Fa-shih.

Ch'ing-ch'an ssü. According to P'ei's *Hua Lu*, there were paintings by Chêng Fa-shih.

Yen-hsing ssü. According to P'ei's *Hua Lu*, there were paintings by Chêng Fa-shih and Li Ya.

PART II: THE EASTERN CAPITAL, LOYANG

Fu-hsien ssü. In *Sun-chieh yüan*, scenes from hell, by Wu, and "pestilence dragons", which are very fine.

At both ends of the triple gate, paintings which look like Wu's work.

T'ien-kung ssü. In the triple gate, pictures by Wu, representing "expelling evil". Two Bodhisattvas by Chang Sêng-yu, which were moved there from Chiang-nan.

Ch'ang-shou ssü. Inside the gate, the two walls to the east and the west have demons and divinities by Wu. The circumambulating monks in the porches of the Buddha Hall are also by Wu.

In the Vihāra of the vegetable garden, pictures by Wang Shao-ying.

Ching-ai ssü. In the Buddha Hall a clay statue of the Bodhisattva Maitreya under the Bodhi tree, made according to the model (of a drawing) brought by Wang Hsüan-ts'ê from the Western regions in the second year of the Ling-tê era (A.D. 665).

(Several other clay statues of Bodhisattvas and guardians by prominent artists) . . . In the main hall, on the eastern and western walls, pictures sketched by Liu Hsing-ch'ên and finished in colours by Chao K'an, representing Vimalakīrti and Vairocana. Also a Fa-hua T'ai-tzû, by Liu Mao-tê, son of Liu Hsing-ch'ên, and a picture representing Buddhist divinities assembling in the "Western Land", sketched by Chao Wu-tuan. The Sixteen Subjects for Meditation and a scene of King Yama, sketched by Liu A-tsu.

In *Hsi-ch'an yüan*, on the north wall, scenes from the *Hua-yen sūtra*, sketched by Chang Fa-shou; on the north wall, a Buddhist assembly and a landscape, sketched by Ho Ch'ang-shou. There are also human

figures sketched by Chang Fa-shou and completed by Chao K'an. On the eastern and western walls, pictures of Maitreya and of monks performing the prodakṣina ceremony, sketched by Wang Shao-ying and completed by Tung Chung. In the western gallery, a wall-painting done in the tenth year of the K'ai-yüan era (A.D. 723) by Wu Tao-tzû and finished with colours by Chai Yen. In the hall of the *Tung-ch'an yüan* paintings of the Ten Divisions of Hell, sketched by Wu Ching-ts'ang and finished with colours by Ch'ên Ch'ing-tzû. On the east wall, pictures of the "Western Land", sketched by Su Ssü-chung and completed by Ch'ên Ch'ing-tzû. The picture of a Bodhisattva and paintings on the lower wall of the inner gallery, sketched by Wu Ching-ts'ang and completed by Ch'ên Ch'ing-tzû. . . . In the main courtyard, wall-pictures of circumambulating monks and divinities, sketched by Chao Wu-tuan, Liu Hsing-ch'ên, Shih Nu, Liu Mao-tê, Ho Ch'ang-shou, etc., and completed by Ch'ên Shu-tzû and others. . . . In the pictures illustrating the *Jih-tsang sūtra* and the *Yüeh-tsang sūtra* there are "pestilence dragons", which are even better than those in *Fu-hsien ssü* (in *Ch'ang-an*). . .

Lung-hsing ssü. In the Western Ch'an precinct; east end of the hall, a picture representing the Eight Kings dividing the relics of the Buddha, by Chan Tzû-ch'ien.

Ta-yün ssü. East of the gate, two wall-pictures of demons and divinities as well as the six Bodhisattvas and scenes from the *sūtra* of the Pure Land on the Buddha Hall and a Wind-god on the pavilion are all the work of Wei-ch'ih. The yellow dog and the falcon are very fine.

Hung-shêng ssü. Pictures by Ch'ên Ching-yen and Chang Chih.

Chao-ch'êng ssü. On the snow blinds in the western portico, are pictures illustrating the *Hsi-yü chi* (Record of Western Regions) by Yang T'ing-kuang. Under the triple gate, pictures of two divine guardians by Chang Tsun-li. In the hall, pictures of the Pure Land (Amitābha's Paradise?) and Bhaisajyaguru's Paradise by Ch'êng Hsün.

Shêng-tz'u ssü. In the north-western Ch'an precinct, pictures by Ch'êng Hsün, representing scenes from the *Pên-hsing sūtra*. Pictures of Vimalakīrti and others by Yang T'ing-kuang.

Huang-tao kuan. The picture of the *Tung-fêng* (sacrificing to the eastern holy mountain?) is by Wu. The *Liang-ching chi* (Description of the Two Capitals) is wrong in stating that it is not a picture by a famous master. There is also a painting by Wu Tao-tzû in the Lao-chün shrine north of the city, and a poem by Tu Fu in which he says:

"The Five Sages stand together in dragon's robes;
The thousand officers like wild geese in flight.
When painters consider the men who went before,
Then Wu Tao-tzû alone is master of the field".

Kuang-yen ssû. Paintings by Tung Po-jên.

T'ien-nü ssû. Paintings by Chan Tzû-ch'ien. They are not to be seen now.

POSTSCRIPTUM

IN THE fifth year of the Hui-ch'ang era Emperor Wutsung ordered the destruction of the Buddhist temples and pagodas. Only two or three of them were preserved in both capitals, and only a few of the famous wall-paintings in the temples were saved. At the time there were some collectors who had taken them away and had them placed on the walls of their houses, but only very

few of those that have been described above have been preserved. Before that time, however, the prime minister Li Tê-yü, when he was governor of Chê-hsi (Chekiang), had ordered the erection of the Kan-lu ssû, and this temple was the only one that was not destroyed. Then he took all the wall-paintings from the temples in his district and placed them in this temple. The following are the most important:

Ku K'ai-chih: Vimalakirti.

Tai An-tao: Mañjuśrî.

Lu T'an-wei: A Bodhisattva.

Hsieh Ling-yün: Six Bodhisattvas.

Chang Sêng-yu: A Divinity.

id.: A Divinity.

id.: Ten Bodhisattvas (?)

id.: Bodhisattvas and Divinities.

Chan Tzû-ch'ien: Two Bodhisattvas (?)

Han Kan: Four Groups of circumambulating Monks.

Lu Yao: Four Groups of circumambulating Monks.

Wu Tao-tzû: Two Monks.

Wu Tao-tzû: Demon and Divinities.

Wang T'o-tzû: The Mountain Sumern at the Sea.

IV

Wang Wei and some Followers

WANG WEI was a somewhat younger contemporary of Wu Tao-tzû, but the two painters probably never met and had nothing in common. He is represented by the Chinese historians as the perfect gentleman-painter to whom painting was never of greater importance than his other artistic occupations, music, poetry, calligraphy, and gardening, in all of which he attained a degree of perfection. It may even be safely assumed that Wang Wei would never have become so famous with posterity if he had been active only as a painter. Pictures are sooner lost or forgotten than poems, particularly in an eminently literary nation, which is one of the reasons, as noted before, why Li Po and Tu Fu are so much better known than any of the painters. Wang Wei's lyrical poems are still counted among the gems of Chinese literature and have been translated into various languages, whereas no fully authenti-

cated specimens of his brush survive. We are restricted mainly to more or less reliable copies or imitations after his famous compositions and to the testimonies of literary records in our attempts to obtain some knowledge about Wang Wei's importance as a painter.

Because of his established position in the literary history of China, Wang Wei's personal life has been well recorded. We know the dates of his birth (699), of his *chin shih* degree, and of his appointments first as a minor local official in Shantung and then as a junior censor at the court. It is further recorded that he lost his wife in 730 and thenceforth spent most of his time in solitude, or with Buddhist friends at his country home, Wang-ch'uan, in Shensi, and that at the death of his mother he turned his place into a Buddhist monastery. The deep religious bent of his nature seems to have become

more and more manifest towards the end of his life. He was indeed, to use the words of Chang Yen-yüan, "a noble-minded man who accepted the Buddhist teachings".

The momentous events which took place in 756, when the imperial court was scattered and the palaces of the capital sacked by the soldiers of An Lu-shan, brought also a sudden change in the life of Wang Wei. After a vain attempt to save himself by flight, he was forced by An Lu-shan to accept the position of a censor at the rebel's court, an event which was counted as a black spot on his official record when the imperial house was re-established a few months later. Wang Wei was again imprisoned and would have met the same fate as other rebels, had not his brother, who then stood in favour at court, been able to save him.

His at bottom unshaken faithfulness to the imperial house was also expressed in a famous poem, *The Frozen Pearl*, which reached the ears of the emperor and helped to save him. He was given an official charge in the household of the crown prince, but he had then only a couple of years more to live; his death occurred in 759.

Wang Wei's pictorial activity was evidently strongly coloured by his religious and poetic interests. The main part of his *œuvre* consisted of Buddhist pictures and of landscapes with a poetic undercurrent. He made several representations of Vimalakīrti, the legendary ascetic who according to a popular tradition had been staying in China long before the introduction of Buddhism, and who was particularly venerated by the painters for his unsullied purity of life and thought. Wang Wei's "style name", Mo-ch'i, was composed after the name of this Buddhist teacher, Wei Mo-ch'i, the Chinese equivalent for Vimalakīrti. No less than four Vimalakīrti pictures by Wang Wei are mentioned in the catalogue of the emperor Hui-tsung's collection; they indicate his predilection for the motif, even if not all were originals. Mi Fei mentions a picture of a Pratyeka Buddha by Wang Wei, in which the painter had introduced himself wearing

a yellow mantle and a peach coloured cap at the Buddha's feet.

Another of Wang Wei's figure paintings which may be recalled in this connexion represented Fu Shêng, a famous scholar of the third century B.C., who is said to have preserved certain sections of *Shu-ching* (The Book of History) from the burning of the books under Ch'in Shih Huang-ti. This picture, which is mentioned in the *Hsüan-ho hua-p'u* and other early books, has been identified with a small handscroll in the former Abe collection (Osaka Museum) (Pl. 90). The old emaciated man in scant clothing is shown seated on a straw mat at a low table, holding a scroll in his thin hands. The figure is shown in half profile and the table is placed obliquely, but there is no indication of a horizontal plane except by the mat. It is now in a rather decrepit condition, the silk being full of cracks, but it is apparently not much restored. One may still observe the fine ink-lines, and the sensitive characterization of the thin face bespeaks sympathy and close observation. The picture is provided with a number of imperial seals of the Sung period and also with important colophons written by the emperor Kao-tsung and some prominent artists, such as Shên Chou. It has evidently, at least since the Sung period, been accepted as a genuine work by Wang Wei, but a closer examination has convinced me that it is more likely to be a carefully executed copy, probably from the very beginning of the Sung period.

Wang Wei also executed some wall-paintings in Buddhist temples in Ch'ang-an, for instance in Tz'ü-ên ssü and Ching-yüan ssü, and also in the K'ai-yüan temple in Fêng-hsiang, at some distance further westward, not far from his country home at Wang-ch'uan. This was the place where Su Tung-p'o (in 1060) was so deeply impressed by the lyric beauty of Wang Wei's work and tried to define it in contradistinction to a picture by the great Wu Tao-tzû in the same temple. Tung-p'o's poem has served more than any other records to immortalize the characteristic manners of the two T'ang-painters, but before we quote the Sung poet we should like to

recall the characterizations by the leading T'ang critics of Wang Wei as a landscape-painter and his relation to Wu Tao-tzū. They are more restrained and cooler in tone.

Chu Ching-hsüan's words in *T'ang-ch'ao ming-hua lu* do not reveal any particular admiration for the master. He places Wang Wei in the second, or so called wonderful, class together with Li Chao-tao and some less-known men and writes: "His landscapes and his paintings of pines and rocks were painted like those by Master Wu, but were outstanding for their sober style". The inference seems to be that Wang Wei followed Wu Tao-tzū as a landscape-painter, though his manner of painting was somewhat neater and more refined.

Chang Yen-yüan's remarks seem to be based on more intimate observations, yet they are more critical; he wrote in *Li-tai ming-hua chü*, Chapt. X: "Wang Wei painted landscapes in a style which connected the old with the modern. Many of these, now in family collections, are pictures coloured by workmen under the direction of Yu-ch'êng. Open marshlands and clumps of trees in the distance he painted in an exceedingly sketchy and blunt fashion, and on the other hand, when he tried to work in a more subtle and refined manner, he was still further removed from the truth."

Whatever Chang Yen-yüan meant by his qualifying words, they certainly suggest a reserve in regard to Wang Wei's genius as a landscapist, which is no longer to be felt in the words of later critics such as Su Tung-p'o and Tung Ch'ü-ch'ang. To them he was one of the greatest masters of his age, the originator of all that was best and purest in Chinese landscape-painting and the founder of the "Southern School". The significance of this classification has already been roughly indicated in our discussion of Li Ssü-hsün's position as the founder of the "Northern School", and the implications will gradually become more evident during our study of landscape painters of later periods.

More important from a psychological and aesthetic point of view are, however, the remarks noted

down by the congenial Su Tung-p'o after his visit to the temples in Fêng-hsiang where he was confronted with some superb creations by Wu Tao-tzū and Wang Wei. They contain in condensed poetic form the fundamental ideas which have served as guidance for later critics in their attempts to characterize the two masters. Tung-p'o wrote (*Shih chi*, IV):

"When I went to see the pictures by Wu in the P'u-mên and K'ai-yüan temples where - at the eastern pagoda of K'ai-yüan - Mo-ch'i also had left some traces of his brush, I saw among them two paintings quite unsurpassed. Tao-tzū, indeed, was bold and free, grand as the rolling waves of the sea; his hand moved as swiftly as the wind and the rain; there was life even in the places where the brush had not reached.

"The brilliant halo (of the Buddha) rose above the peaks and the dense trees, like the sun in the east. The wise man (*i.e.* Buddha) was (represented) speaking about silence and extinction (Nirvāṇa). Those who understood were wailing and weeping, while those who were only slightly touched placed their hands on their hearts. The barbarian chiefs and numberless devils were rushing forward, pushing out their heads like sea-turtles.

"But Mo-ch'i, who was a born poet, carried the fragrant iris¹ at his waist [as he said in a poem]. Today I saw his painting on the wall; it is like his poems, pure and sincere. All the pupils (of the Buddha) in the Jetavana garden are as thin as cranes; in their hearts the passions are as dead as ashes and cannot be rekindled. In front of the gate there are two clumps of bamboo; their snowy stems are attached to frostbound roots. Mo-ch'i reached beyond the shapes. He had the wings of an immortal to soar above the cage.

"I saw the two; both were divinely beautiful - but as to Wang Wei, I retire in silence, without a word."

Wang Wei's picture in the K'ai-yüan temple must indeed have been something quite out of the common, but it may be doubted whether it ever appeared more so than in the poetic interpretation of

¹ The *Chih-flower*; according to Giles (1844) *Iris florentina*, the root of which is used as a carminative.

Su Tung-p'o, who like Wang Wei was a poet as well as a painter. No one has better understood the genius of Wang Wei than he, or better explained it to posterity. He did it several times but most succinctly in the often quoted words: "When enjoying myself with Mo-ch'i's poems I find pictures in them; when looking at Mo-ch'i's pictures, I find in them poems".

To illustrate or support this idea he quoted Wang Wei's poem on the picture representing "Mist-rain at Lan-t'ien", which contained the following lines:

"From the Blue River white stones project;
On the waters of jade a few red leaves,
On the mountain paths no rain as yet,
But the air is moist and wets the clothes."

This is Mo-ch'i's poem, though some one objected and said that an amateur had added it on Mo-ch'i's picture.¹ However that may have been, it must be admitted that the poem contained the vision for a picture.

Later appreciations of Wang Wei by the "gentleman painters", or representatives of the *wen-jên hua*, are more or less in the same vein, and they reach a culmination in the writings by Tung Ch'i-ch'ang. In his colophons he has contributed many interesting remarks about Wang Wei's manner of painting and favourite motifs, as for instance the following:² "Yu-ch'êng (Wang Wei) corresponds among the painters to Yu-chün (Wang Hsi-chih) among the calligraphists; there have been few such men in the

world. Some years ago I saw a *Hsüeh-chiang t'u* (Snow on the River) in the possession of the great scholar Hsiang Yüan-pien in Chia-hsing. It had no painted 'wrinkles' but only contours. The imitations made of it in later times, such as Wang Shu-ming's *Chien-ko t'u* (The Chien-ko Pass), are in regard to brush-work and ideas rather like Li Chung-shê's (Chao-iao's) work, and I doubt their faithfulness to Wang Wei's style. Then, in Ch'ang-an, I acquired Chao Ta-nien's copy of Wang Wei's *Hu-chuang ch'ing-hsia t'u* (The Village at the Lake on a Bright Summer Day), and this too had no fine wrinkles like the *Hsüeh-chiang* scroll of the Hsiang family. It seemed to me that this copy was not quite so effective as Yu-ch'êng's picture, because the great master's 'divine' works are very remarkable for their wrinkles. Although Chao Ta-nien was able and refined, he did not take pains in making wrinkles, and consequently something was lacking in his brush-work; he grasped only one aspect of Yu-ch'êng's art.

"Finally I also acquired Kuo Chung-shu's drawing after the Wang-ch'uan scroll which showed a lot of fine 'wrinkles'. According to tradition the original picture was in Wu-lin (at Hangchow), and since it was said to be a tracing, it could not be very far removed from the original. Yet, the picture I saw was a common thing and not sufficient to enable me to form an opinion about his style of painting."³

¹ Su Tung-p'o's colophon is quoted in *Shu-hua p'u*, vol. 81, and in *Ch'ing-ho shu-hua fang*, III, 1, 80, with minor differences.

² From Tung Ch'i-ch'ang's *Hsin yin*, as quoted in *Hua-hsueh hsin-pin*, III, 1, 16.

³ The *t'u fa* refers to the way of rendering the wrinkles, i.e. the finishing hook-end of a line which serves to bring out the form or the texture of stones, rocks, mountains, tree-trunks, or other elements in a landscape. They have been variously classified under 16, 18 or 26 descriptive names by Chinese authors of Sung and Ming times, interpreted in English by S. Taki (*Three Essays on Oriental Painting*, pp. 47-49) and by Benjamin March (*Some Technical Terms of Chinese Painting*). The first-named author gives the following list: 1. *P'o-ma t'u'un* (hemp-fibre wrinkles), 2. *Luan-ma t'u'un* (confused hemp stalks), 3. *Ho-yeh t'u'un* (like the veins of lotus leaves), 4. *Chieh-so t'u'un* (like twists of rope), 5. *Yün-t'ou t'u'un* (like confused clouds or thunder heads), 6. *Chih-ma t'u'un* (like sesamum seeds), 7. *Niu-miao t'u'un* (like the hair of cattle), 8. *Tao-wo t'u'un* (resembling the eddies of water), 9. *Yi-*

tien t'u'un (like rain drops), 10. *Luan-ch'ui t'u'un* (confused brush-wood), 11. *Fai-t'ou t'u'un* (like lumps of alum), 12. *Kuei-pi t'u'un* (like wrinkles on a devil's face), 13. *Ta fu-p'i t'u'un* (cuts made by a big axe), 14. *Hsiao fu-p'i t'u'un* (cuts of a small axe), 15. *Ma-ya t'u'un* (like horses' teeth), 16. *Chê-tai t'u'un* (like the folds of a belt). But there are, as said above, also variations and emendations to this list; No. 3 is sometimes called *Chüan-yün t'u'un* (convoluted or rolling clouds), No. 10 is practically the same as *P'o-wang t'u'un* (resembling a men net). Other forms of wrinkles practised in the Sung period are: *Tou-pai t'u'un* (like two halves of a split beam); Mi Fei had a special dotting method called *Mi-tien t'u'un*, whereas Yen Wen-kuei used *Tz'ü-li t'u'un* (pointed thorn-like strokes) and Chiang Kuan-tao a sort of combined method described as *Ni-li pa-t'ing t'u'un* (nails pulled up from mud). The wrinkles and brush-strokes of Tang Yin are sometimes described as *T'ieh-hsien t'u'un* (like iron wires). The study of the *t'u-un-fa* became to the critics a kind of graphology; they saw in them the most tangible expressions of the respective painters' individual style and temperament.

In the continuation of this description of Wang Wei's paintings Tung Ch'i-ch'ang mentions a small snow scene by Chao Mêng-fu, in the possession of general Yang Kao-yu, "remarkable for its tranquil distance and limpid light" which, according to the writer, showed close dependence on Wang Wei in the brush-work and the manner of the wrinkles. Tung's critical acumen seems to have been directed principally towards the "wrinkles" in the landscapes of the old masters; and he says definitely that Wang Wei was the first to use this kind of finishing and modelling brush-strokes in order to render the texture of the soil and the crusty character of stones and mountains. "From Wang Wei onwards", he writes, "the painters started to use wrinkles (*ts'un-fa*) and the flowing ink (or tinted wash) method (*hsüan-jan fa*). He changed the method of painting just as Wang Hsi-chih changed the manner of Chung-yu. It was as marvellous and admirable as the soaring of the fêng and the huang."

Tung Ch'i-ch'ang, who considered Wang Wei as his artistic ancestor, i.e. the head of the Southern School, had no doubt as good a knowledge of the master's art as was attainable in the Ming period, but to what extent this was based on pictures of unquestionable authenticity is difficult to tell. Some of Tung's colophons are attached to pictures which are more like early copies than like originals, yet, on the other hand, it must be admitted that we are indebted to him for most of the knowledge about Wang Wei's art that is still available. We shall have occasion to return to him several times.

Most famous among Wang Wei's great landscapes was apparently – to judge by the number of copies still existent – the so-called Wang-ch'uan scroll in which the painter had given a detailed illustrative presentation of his country-home at Lan-t'ien near Fêng-hsiang in Shensi.¹ It has been reproduced repeatedly in paintings as well as in stone engravings; the latter were executed, at least in part, on the very spot of the former Wang home as a kind of historical record or memorial to the great painter through whose activity the locality had

gained its fame and become a place of pilgrimage for poets and art-lovers. The engravings were supplemented by a chronicle, the *Wang-ch'uan chih*, containing biographical information about Wang Wei and a list of other artists and poets who had been active there (Pl. 91).

The original picture, which is said to have been bequeathed by the painter to the temple at Wang-ch'uan, may have been lost at a comparatively early period, but its fame spread wide, and the composition became known through a number of copies among which the one made by Kuo Chung-shu at the beginning of the tenth century seems to have been the most important. It served for the reproductions in stone engravings and probably also for painted copies of the Sung and early Yüan periods.

The most complete idea of the general design and the various motifs included in it is offered by the engravings which, however, on the other hand, are entirely devoid of pictorial atmosphere. The idea of the painter seems to have been to give a dioramic presentation of his estate, which extended along the banks of the Wang river. The unifying elements of the design are the winding river, which appears and disappears at various places, and the mountains which form a continuous range in the background. Between these and divided into sections by transversal hillocks, he spreads out the groves and orchards, gardens and cultivated fields and the building compounds enclosed by high fences. Everything is put down with an accuracy based on close observation of nature and reflecting a kind of intimacy that must have been inspired by a deep attachment to the place. It is not a portrait landscape in the western sense of the term. The formations of nature have been utilized rather freely as a frame by which the buildings and the gardens, etc. are set off. In other words, the painter has woven his dreams and fancies on the warp of actual observations, or he has steeped

¹ For historical information re the Wang-ch'uan scroll and its reproduction in engravings see B. Laufer's article in *Orientalische Zeitschrift*, I, pp. 28–55. Additional information by J. C. Ferguson in the same review, III, p. 58.

these in the atmosphere of a unifying vision. The artistic transposition is quite free within the limits of the prevailing formal conditions. The relative proportion between the various elements such as mountains, trees, buildings, boats and the like is arbitrary, and their juxtaposition is influenced by illustrative rather than pictorial ideas.

In the earlier painted copies, which may date from the latter part of the Sung dynasty, such as the pictures belonging to Professor Kobayashi and to Professor Kaizuka in Kyoto, we may notice the shading or modelling of the mountain crevices with *p'i-ma ts'un*, the wrinkles resembling spread-out hemp fibres, and also an attempt to suggest by gradations of light and shade an enveloping atmosphere and something of an aerial perspective. These pictorial suggestions are almost completely missing in the later reproductions which, however (in most cases), have the advantage of greater completeness. Among these may be recorded the long scroll in the Seattle Art Museum, probably from the beginning of the Ming period, and two later more schematic versions in the Freer Gallery, not to mention one or two in private possession.

In the early copies the colouring is rather slight, consisting mostly of yellowish, greenish and brownish tints, whereas the heavier colouring in later ones serves to emphasize the decorative effect.

Another picture by Wang Wei which has called forth much praise and discussion and many imitations, is the *Chiang-shan hsieh-chi t'u*, Clearing after Snowfall on the Mountains along a River. This picture is, however, not mentioned in the Chinese records before the latter part of the Ming period, i.e., by Tung Ch'i-ch'ang and Chang Ch'ou. The picture seems, as a matter of fact, to have been something of a discovery by Tung, if we may believe his own words expressed in colophons and reported in *Hua-yen*, as follows:¹

"In the autumn of this year I heard that Wang Wei's *Chiang-shan hsieh-chi* scroll was in the possession of Fêng Kung-shu. I immediately asked a friend to go to Wu-lin (Hangchow) to borrow it. Kung-shu

considered the picture as precious as his head, his eyes, or his brain, but when he learned about my passion for Yu-ch'êng he made an exception to meet my desire. I fasted for three days; then I unrolled it and saw at once that it really was in the same style as the little Chao Mêng-fu (previously mentioned). It made me very happy. Yu-ch'êng said about himself: 'In this life I am a vagrant nonsensical poet, in a former life I was certainly a painter'. I had never seen a genuine work by him, but only thought of such in my heart. Now I found that the picture of my thoughts corresponded to reality. Is it possible that in a former life I entered Yu-ch'êng's studio and saw him seated at his work and that the impressions of former ways have not been forgotten?"²

Tung then wrote a colophon to the painting, in which he said among other things that "although there were many great painters before Wang Wei, skilled in every branch of their art, they could not express a spiritual quality in their landscapes".

The actual discovery of the picture was related in another colophon by its owner, Fêng Kung-shu. According to him, it had been lost for a long time, because it was hidden in a lacquered bamboo tube that served as a door bolt in an old house near Hou-tsai mên (in Wu-lin). One day this tube broke into pieces and out of it dropped three scrolls, one of them being the picture. "At first I did not believe in it, but after looking at it several times my spirit was aroused. I closed my door, burned incense and made myself free from all other things, and then I felt the spirit of the mountains, the freshness of the streams, and the mist over the spring garden." He describes the refinement of the execution by means of some metaphors and says finally: "It was really Mo-ch'i's refined spirit, fused into water and ink, which produced this precious thing".

Does this picture which aroused such a high degree of enthusiasm in connoisseurs like Fêng Kung-shu and Tung Ch'i-ch'ang still exist? Some

¹ Some minor variations in this text exist in the reprints in *Shu-hua fang*, III, and *Hua-hsieh hsün-yin*, III, p. 17.

² From *Hua-yen* quoted in *Hua-hsieh hsün-yin*, III, pp. 16, 17.

students think that the question should be answered in the affirmative, but others are more doubtful. In any case, there are still some interesting versions of the picture, two of them formerly in the possession of the well-known Chinese collector Lo Chên-yü, who did not hesitate to declare them both as originals by Wang Wei. I saw the one in 1922 in Lo Chên-yü's house in Tientsin (but I do not know where it is now), whereas the other had been acquired a year or two earlier by Professor Ch. Ogawa of Kyoto, now also a man of the past (Pls. 92, 93 and 94-96).

This picture represents only part of the whole composition, but it is accompanied by colophons by Tung Ch'i-ch'ang and Fêng Kung-shu (from which quotations were communicated above) and also by later men. It consists of a long expanse of quiet, grey water out of which creviced stones and split rocks lift their snow-covered humps. Spare trees grow on spits of land jutting out from rocks and in the cracks between the humps. On the opposite side of the water a mountain range is silhouetted in white and greyish tones against a darker sky, receding at some places into something invisible – an infinite space enveloped by the haze of evaporating snow – an atmosphere of deep repose.

This poetic, not to say tonal, appeal reveals the touch or thought of a great master, though the pictorial expression is in some respects imperfect. The blunt outlining of the wrinkles and contours of the rocks is disturbing; it makes them look like sacks or bolsters rocking on the water. The trees in the foreground are also delineated in a hard and dry manner, whereas other elements, such as the few small figures and the sailing-boat, are sensitively drawn. The same inequality may also be observed in the contours of the mountain range in the background: they are at some places very delicate and at other places excessively accentuated. This inconsistency leads inevitably to the conclusion that the original picture has been subjected to a posterior "restoration", when most of the brush-lines were retraced in a way detrimental to the character of the original picture.

It is thus under present conditions not easy to decide when the somewhat disfigured picture actually was executed. If we accept the verdicts of Tung Ch'i-ch'ang and Fêng Kung-shu expressed in the above-mentioned colophons, the picture should be classified as of the T'ang period – a possibility difficult to accept or to disprove owing to the deforming restoration, which may have taken place after the composition of the encomiums; but the best preserved parts of it give the impression of a work executed before the Sung period.

The other picture mentioned above is more than twice as long as the Ogawa scroll and comprises a more complete rendering of the same motif – the snow melting on rocky shores and on distant mountains along a river, or the mood of an early spring day – such as may be experienced in Hang-chou in February – when after an abundant snow-fall the air is heavy with moisture and every form enveloped in a hazy mist. The effect is successfully rendered in the picture by a prevailing soft grey tone which is also observable in the reproduction. The execution is sensitively unified, there are no traces of retouches or repairs, and the wrinkles of the rocks and mountain slopes are rendered according to the pattern known as "fibres of lotus leaves" (*ho-yeh ts'un*).

The picture is evidently not of the same period nor by the same hand as the scroll described above. It is altogether a better unified pictorial rendering of the characteristic motif, which here has been interpreted with a touch which reminds us of Yüan rather than of T'ang painting.

The picture in the Palace Museum called *Snow Scene in Mountains*, which also was shown in the London exhibition of 1935 (Pl. 98), represents mountains rising in successive tiers, the one behind and above the other, the last reaching almost to the upper border.¹ The pointed peaks are accentuated by white snow and stand out in contrast to the dark sky. The mountains have a green tint, but the bare trees and the small houses are drawn in ink and

¹ Cf. *Ku-lung*, vol. I.

accentuated with white. The whole thing seems to have darkened and consequently now makes a duller impression than originally, but it has still a definite expressionistic appeal apart from its decorative effect. The emperor Ch'ien-lung praises it in an inscription as a work of the T'ang period which, according to the *Shih-ch'ü pao-chi*, should be ascribed to Wang Wei.

Somewhat related to this, though more intimate, is the large album leaf formerly in the Manchu household collection which is known as Snow on the River (*Hsüeh-hsi t'u*) or Snow on the Ford. The picture seems to have been cut out of a larger composition and remounted in the Sung period, when the emperor Hui-tsung wrote the title on its margin (or, has the strip with the writing been transferred from another picture?) In 1621 Tung Ch'ü-ch'ang added a colophon in which he says that a number of experts examined the picture in his studio and agreed that it was painted by Wang Wei. The same opinion is repeated by the emperor Ch'ien-lung (Pl.97).

On the rocks in the centre of the composition are some low buildings and leafless trees. A house-boat is being poled across the stream, and on the further shore some snowy roofs stand out against the sky. The moist atmosphere that follows on an abundant snowfall envelops the whole scene in a tone of grey mist. The effect is somewhat similar to that of the *Chiang-shan hsüeh-chi t'u*, but rendered in a more primitive way. The snow lies heavily on the ground as well as on the houses, the trees and the figures in the boat; it is the principal element of the pictorial expression and it has been utilized with great skill to accentuate the forms as well as the wide expanse of grey water between the undulating shore lines. The picture may be described as a colouristic essay in grey and white, appealing through its economy of means. But not knowing the original, we must abstain from expressing any opinion as to its period of execution.

The pictures described above form a fairly homogeneous group and though most of them seem

to have been executed after the T'ang period, they may be accepted as more or less characteristic of a type of landscape that originated with Wang Wei. It was said by one of the old writers that Wang Wei "bridged the old with the new", a statement which, rightly interpreted, may be said to indicate his intermediate position in the history of Chinese landscape-painting. His compositions are still to a large extent based on illustrative elements – closely observed and rendered with great exactness – but these are not simply strung together or displayed in more or less decorative combinations, but form integrated parts of a larger motif, a complete scene which has not only a formal but also a pictorial unity. The various elements are co-ordinated in a unified space (or on a dioramic stage) and steeped in an atmosphere suggested by pictorial means. The vision of the painter has a wider range than that of the earlier masters; he penetrates deeper into nature and transmits his observations or experiences with individual accents.

Nothing seems to have given him greater enjoyment or made a stronger appeal to his creative imagination than new fallen snow – that very light and fugitive, and yet so powerful medium which within a few moments can change the whole aspect of a landscape. Snow does away with all distracting features and accentuates the essential forms, bringing unity into a view like the brush of a great master. Wang Wei returned to the motif over and over again, as appears from the lists of his works; and, as far as we may judge from the pictures mentioned above, he understood how to transmit its reposeful harmony.

Among the forty pictures ascribed to the painter in *Hsüan-ho hua-p'u* at least a dozen are snow-scenes and there are others mentioned elsewhere.¹ To quote all the titles would be of little avail because they are not very informative; some are empty views such as Snow on a Thousand Peaks, Snow by a River, Mountain Cottage in Snow, etc..

¹ Cf. *Ch'ing-ho shu-hua fang*, III, 1, 17 and Ferguson, *op. cit.*, pp. 50–52.

while others have a centralizing human motif, as for instance, Angling in Snow, Bidding Farewell in Snow, Passing the Ford in Snow, The Pa Bridge in a Snowstorm, presumably a more dramatic scene, not to mention the much discussed picture called A Banana in Snow, which was criticized by some of the philistines for its apparent neglect of the proper seasonal characteristics. It became, as a matter of fact, a habit in the Sung period and later to call every old-fashioned snow landscape Wang Wei. Critics pointed out that the signatures were often forged in order to give the pictures higher values in the market; and Mi Fei had good reason for his remark: "Paintings of snow scenes by Chiang-nan artists in a style resembling that of Wang Wei are usually hailed as the master's works".

The similarity between the binding effect of snow and that of the brush-work of a great master noted a few lines above may, indeed, be more than a fanciful comparison. It is possible that Wang Wei's use of snow, a material factor, to unify his pictures, paved the way to the general vogue of monochrome, which is said to have followed in the wake of his art.

It is true that Wang Wei also painted other motifs, other moods of Nature, such as garden scenes of spring and summer, or the bare wind-swept trees of autumn, but the range of his concepts was not very wide. Like the great poets of his time he returned over and over again to certain favourite scenes, expressing them with remarkable sensitiveness and a realization of their evocative significance. His art reflected the keenness of his observing eye as well as the response of his soul, and it made him beloved as only a true poet can be. No painter has been hailed with more inspiring words than those written by Su Tung-p'o on Wang Wei; they are worth repeating: "Mo-ch'i reached beyond the shapes. He had the wings of an Immortal to soar above the cage."

* * *

It is surprising to find that none of the pictures by or after Wang Wei which have survived is executed

according to the so-called *hsüan-jan fa*, or the *p'o mo* technique, i.e. with a broad brush and freely flowing ink, because this manner of painting is said to have been preferably employed by the later adherents of the so-called Southern School. We shall have occasion to return to it repeatedly in discussing certain painters of the Sung and Yüan periods. The traditional statement that this kind of ink-painting started with Wang Wei finds support also in the Essay on Landscape Painting which has often been included among Wang Wei's writings, though it is obviously not composed by the master but by a later representative of the Southern School. In view of the tradition and the fact that the ideas expressed in the essay perpetuate Wang Wei's attitude to landscape-painting, we will quote here a few extracts from the first section called "Secrets of Landscape", which may serve to give some idea about the general trend of this essay.¹

"In the art of painting ink is the foremost; by it the characteristics of nature may be perfected and the creator's works completed. In a picture of a few inches may thus be represented the scenery of a thousand *li*. East, west, south and north appear before the eye; spring, summer, autumn, winter are born under the brush.

"One should start with the outlines of the water

¹ The text of *Hua-lunshih mi-chüeh* is included in the collected works of Wang Wei edited by Chao Tien-ch'eng (c.1737) and in various *ts'ung shu*. In the preface to this edition the editor states that some part of the text was engraved on stone tablets at Kuan-chung (Shensi?). He expresses, however, the opinion that the whole thing was the composition of a later man who "borrowed the name of Yu-ch'êng" (Wang Wei); the reason why he includes it among Wang Wei's works is simply the fact that it has been so "often quoted as Yu-ch'êng's writing and has served as a guide for painters. It would be a pity to leave it out."

The text is rendered with certain variations in different reprints, such as *Hua-lunshih hsin-jin*, *Shu-hua hui-k'ao*, and others.

It has been translated into foreign languages repeatedly, but most of these translations are incomplete, for instance, Professor Alexieff's translation into Russian, published in *Wostok* 1922; Professor S. Eliselt's in *Revue des Arts Asiatiques*, 1927; also Mrs. Grantham's pamphlet, *Wang Wei, Paysagiste*, Peking 1922; German translation by A. von Herder in *Sinica* 1930 and (the second half of the essay) by Johny Heftner in *Oriental, Zeitschr.*, 1931; minor extracts were rendered into English by Giles and Waley.

and avoid making mountains floating about. Then one should lay out the branching roads and not make them into one continuous big road. The main peak must be made very high and lofty, the smaller mountains should stretch forward and impress the spot where a hermit's hut is situated. Some human dwellings should be placed on the banks of the water. Around the village there should be numerous trees to form a grove, and their branches should embrace their trunks. The mountains should be made steep and the water rushing right down; it should not be made running about in confusion from the springs. The ferry port should be quiet. The walking men should be few. The rowing-boats and the bridges on poles should be high and lofty, but the boats in which the fishermen are angling should be flat so that they do not meet with obstructions.

"Between the overhanging dangerous cliffs some strange trees may be placed, and there should be no passages where the mountain sides are steep and the peaks precipitous. The far summits should reach the clouds and disappear in the hazy tone of the distant sky. The place where the water comes out in abundance should be enclosed by clear mountains. Palisaded roads should be made at places where passages are dangerous. On the low ground may be high terraced buildings and nearby large willows shading the dwellings of men. The Buddhist and Taoist temples on the famous mountains should be indicated by strange pine-trees and ornamental towers.

"When the hand becomes acquainted with the brush and the ink-stone, it sometimes happens that it moves about as in play without any attachment, trying to explore the hidden secrets; while the years and the months become as long as eternity. The finest realization does not consist in many words; the best method of study is to return to the guiding principles."

* * *

Wang Wei's importance as a precursor of the *p'o mo* technique is emphasized by the stories and

traditions regarding some of his followers who became famous in this mode of painting. Some of them revelled in ink and applied it not only with the brush but also with the fingers and even with the hair, as Wang Mo did, while Chang Tsao smeared the ink with the flat of his hand. Their eccentricities have no doubt contributed to secure them prominent places in Chinese art-history, though no works by these painters have survived.

Chang Tsao entered public service some time after the middle of the eighth century under the protection of the famous minister Liu Yen (c.780), but was apparently more successful as a painter than as an administrator. The notes about him in *T'ang-ch'ao ming-hua lu* as well as in *Li-tai ming-hua chi* are too extensive to be quoted in extenso, but a few points should be recalled.¹ "He painted pines and rocks, and his landscapes were highly prized in their day, but it was only in his pine-trees that he surpassed all other painters ancient as well as modern. He was a master in handling the brush. Once he took two brushes in his hands and used them simultaneously, painting with the one a dead and with the other a live branch. The vital spirit (*ch'i*) of the tree burst out through mist and haze, its forcefulness defied wind and rain. . . . The live branches were fresh with the sap of spring, the dead ones withered under autumn's blight. . . . His cliffs were so sharply pointed (projecting) that they seemed to be falling down, and one could hear the roaring of the rushing waters", etc.

If we may judge by these descriptions, Chang Tsao's brush-work must have possessed the overwhelming impetus of a gushing spring. He defied all traditional methods and struck out in a new direction. In the *Li-tai ming-hua chi* we are told that when Pi Hung, an older landscape painter, saw Chang Tsao's pictures, "he was greatly impressed and also surprised to find that Chang used

¹ Giles, *op. cit.*, pp. 67, 68, has utilized these sources freely for a biographical account of Chang Tsao's activity. A more exact, complete rendering of the notes of *T'ang-ch'ao ming-hua lu* in Soper's translation. Both publications have been consulted.

only stumpy brushes or his bare hands for spreading the ink on the silk. Therefore he asked Chang, from whom he had learned (to paint), to which the painter answered: 'Externally nature has been my teacher, but internally I have followed the springs of inspiration in the heart'. When Pi Hung heard this, he laid down his brush."

It seems as if everybody who saw Chang Tsao's paintings found them irresistible; they were done in an extremely bold and impetuous manner, sometimes too bold for a brush. Then he used his fingers or his whole hand, and thus became the originator of the method known as "finger painting". He was particularly esteemed as a painter of large folding screens decorated with gnarled pines and rugged cliffs, motifs which return eight or nine hundred years later on Japanese screens and fusumas.¹

Wang Hsia, commonly called Wang Mo (Ink Wang), was a slightly younger painter who worked in another *p'o mo* manner.² There were many strange stories circulating about him, and Chang Yen-yüan heard some of these from his cousin (Hou), who was a friend of Wang Mo. The artist was apparently no less eccentric in his personal life than in his way of wielding the brush. Chang characterizes him as "a crazy fellow, mad on wine", and writes further: "He painted pine-trees, stones and landscapes, though not of a very noble and superior kind; yet much appreciated by the common people". They were apparently too rough for the T'ang critic, who adds: "I do not think that Mo's pictures are wonderful".

The description of how Wang Mo executed these pictures sounds also more fantastic than convincing. It is said that when he got drunk he used to soak his long hair in a pail of ink and then fling or flop the ink on the silk, forming landscapes and figures that seemed to emerge out of clouds and mist.

In his early years he lived in T'ai-chou (Chekiang?) and studied with Cheng Ch'ien, another Bohemian

artist, who was fond of wine and music and was a companion of Li Po and Tu Fu. But his fame as a landscape-painter must also have been considerable, because the emperor Hsüan-tsung wrote of him that "he was perfect in the three arts".³ But as he was induced to hold an office under An Lu-shan, he was degraded and imprisoned (like Wang Wei) on the return of the imperial house. His companionship with Wang Mo must have been of a later date.

Another artist friend of Wang Mo was Ku Huang, *tzu Pu-wang*, known for his humorous and erratic ways as well as for his poetry and painting. When Ku served as a recording officer in the navy at Hsin-t'ing, Wang Mo applied for the post of a patrol officer. When asked the reason why he wanted the post, he answered: "I want an opportunity to observe the landscapes of the sea". He did not keep to the position for more than half a year, but after this period "his brush-work became wonderfully expressive".

It seems indeed to have been the personality and the strange ways of Wang Mo rather than his art that aroused the interest of his contemporaries. The anecdotes leave us with the impression that he was something of an imprisoned genius. When finally he passed away, in 803 or 4, in Jun-chou (Kiang-su), it was found that his coffin was so light that it seemed empty. And the people said: "He was transfigured, now he is gone". No explanations were given, nor any asked for; nothing could have been more fitting for a genius who during his life as a poor painter in his own crazy way struggled for liberation.

¹ *Li-tai ming-hua chi*, X. Two large eight-folded screens, decorated with landscapes, pine-trees and stones are mentioned here, and in *T'ang-ch'ao ming-hua lu* we are told that "a great number of his painted screens are in private collections".

² The expression *p'o mo* referring to Wang Wei's manner of painting may be translated as "graded washes of ink", whereas the same expression, written with another character, referring to Wang Hsia's brush-work, may be translated as "splash ink".

³ A short biography of Cheng Ch'ien in *Li-tai ming-hua chi*, X.

Painters of Horses and Buffaloes

Han Kan, Ch'ên Hung, Han Huang and Tai Sung

THE DIVIDING line between figure-paintings and portraits on the one hand and animal and bird-paintings on the other, which has existed in European art ever since the Renaissance, never had the same importance in the Far East. These different classes of motifs were in China more closely related than in the West, because to the Chinese they were all expressions or symbols of the same flow of life, though in different stages of evolution. The humans were not accorded the privileged position above or outside the rest of Nature that they have held in the West; they were merely integrating parts of a universal organism.

It is true that in the Chinese catalogues the paintings of animals were listed in a special class, called *Tsou shou*, Quadrupeds, but this is usually placed above the class of *Shih ni*, which comprises the pictures of ladies and children. In other words, quadrupeds offered motifs of no less importance than ladies, and it may well be admitted that some of the great artists who devoted themselves to animal-painting, in particular, carried this to a kind of perfection that has hardly been reached elsewhere. Chinese horses and water-buffaloes are not necessarily better characterized than corresponding animals in European art, but they are alive with a different spirit, more akin to that of their creators (just as the mules and muleteers in China often appear surprisingly alike in temperament).

Horses were as a rule represented pasturing or frolicking, or caparisoned with beautiful saddles, but seldom harnessed to vehicles. The Chinese idea of a horse was that of a free and proud creature carrying

the rider with ease and elegance, or playing with its mates as intelligently as any human being. Some of the horse-paintings are explained by the Chinese critics in a symbolic sense; it is said of the steeds that they are proud and elegant in their manners like noble dukes and courtiers, or happy and carefree (on the pasture) like officials free from their daily routine.

Some of the early horse-paintings were also made as records of the magnificent tributes which were sent from various countries of Central and Western Asia to the Chinese emperor, and these horses were all riding-animals, they were counted among the most cherished possessions of the great emperors. This interest in horses developed into a veritable craze in the reign of the emperor Hsüan-tsung, who is said to have had over 40,000 costly steeds in his stables, some of them being trained for regular circus performances: "Horses performed posturing dances; were skilled at climbing steps", writes Tu Fu.¹

Several artists are mentioned in the records of the T'ang period as specialists of horse-painting, but only two among them reached the highest class: Ts'ao Pa and Han Kan. The former is nowadays hardly more than a great name, immortalized by Tu Fu and mentioned by the old critics in connexion with portraits and horse-paintings, but no work of his has survived even in a copy.

If we may trust T'ang Hou, who wrote his essay *Hua chien* at the beginning of the fourteenth century, there still existed at that time some authentic

¹ Cf. Florence Ayscough, *Tu Fu, the Autobiography of a Chinese Poet*, p. 154.

pictures by Ts'ao Pa. He mentions four of them and says that the "style of the master was deep and impressive through its divine splendour and vital movement". He writes furthermore: "I have seen in my life four genuine works by him. One is a picture representing a groom examining a horse . . . the other represents the training of a horse. Both paintings have colophons and seals by the emperor Kao-tsung of the Sung dynasty." He furthermore mentions a picture representing horses at the manger, and a fourth picture, in his own collection, representing men and horses: "One groom with beautiful whiskers who wears a red garment leads a jade-face bay horse, while a eunuch, dressed in green, leads a night-glow (gleaming) white horse. The style and divine splendour are the same here as in the other three paintings. Chao Méng-fu has written a colophon in which he says: 'The T'ang painters who excelled in painting horses were numerous, but Ts'ao Pa and Han Kan are the most famous. Their principles were noble and old and they did not seek formal likeness. It is for this reason that they surpassed the common crowd of artisans. This scroll is beyond doubt a work by Ts'ao Pa. The grooms and servants in the stable have a peculiar expression on their faces which cannot be rendered by vulgar people.'"

Han Kan is likewise highly praised by T'ang Hou, just as by the earlier critics. "In painting horses he grasped their bones and flesh, and in his way of rendering their proportions he was equal to Ts'ao Pa." Fortunately we may still obtain some idea of Han Kan's art not only from the descriptions of the old writers, but also from existing paintings, whether originals or faithful renderings of his ideas. His name has become an almost generic appellation for a certain type of horse-paintings; often repeated in later times.

According to an early tradition, he worked as a boy in the shop of a wine-merchant, "where Wang Wei and his brothers often bought wine on credit for their picnics. When the boy came to collect the money at Wang Wei's house, he sometimes amused

himself by drawing figures and horses in the sand. Wang Wei was startled by the talent and interest (of the boy) and gave him a yearly allowance of 20,000 cash and directed his studies in painting for over ten years."¹

This record of Han Kan's beginnings as a painter is supplemented by the account in *T'ang-ch'ao ming-hua lu*, where it is said that Han Kan was called to the court about the middle of the T'ien-pao era (742-756), and ordered to study horse-painting under Ch'ên Hung. But as the emperor found that he was painting in a fashion entirely different from that of this official court-painter, he asked how that was possible, to which Han Kan replied: "Your Majesty's servant has his own teachers; they are all the horses in Your Majesty's stables". This often quoted reply has, no doubt, contributed to establish Han Kan's fame as the foremost horse-painter, or originator of a new type of horse-painting based on studies of nature rather than on the repetition of traditional models, but the records make it clear that he was no less famous as a figure painter. Most of his horse-paintings also included their human masters, such as the princes and the emperor, hunting, riding or examining the horses, and beside these he painted for the temples in the capital a number of portraits of famous priests and teachers as well as Bodhisattvas and legendary figures. Chang Yen-yüan, in particular, in his list of "Wall-paintings in the Buddhist and Taoist Temples in the two Capitals"² mentions Hsing-t'ang ssü, Pao-ying ssü and Hsi-ta yüan, to which may be added Tzū-sheng ssü (mentioned in *T'ang-ch'ao ming-hua lu*), where Han Kan painted twenty-four saints. But all these wall-paintings perished as told before in 845, whereas other "paintings by him of high priests, saddle-horses, Bodhisattvas and demons and deities were still in existence" when the above-mentioned treatise was written.

Chang Yen-yüan, on the other hand, dwells almost exclusively on Han Kan's importance as a

¹ Cf. *Shu-hua p'u*, vol. 47, quoted from *Yu-yang tuo-tu*.

² *Li-tai ming-hua chi*, Chapter IV.

horse-painter. He refers to Tu Fu's poem about Ts'ao Pa, the great predecessor of Han Kan, in which the poet said that "Han Kan painted only the flesh, not the bones (as Ts'ao Pa did), which made his horses look tame and dull". This characterization, however, according to Chang Yen-yüan, was quite wrong, because the remarkable thing about Han Kan's horses was their intense vitality (*ch'i yün*). They actually did justice to the emperor's wonderful steeds, which as a matter of fact are more closely described than the paintings. We are told how the horses sent as tributes to the emperor from Ferghana and other Western countries were collected in large grazing camps, how they were trained in every possible way so as to become not only "strong enough to chase the wind" but also like "Sages of the Stable Manger".

Fifty-two of Han Kan's pictures – mainly horses and hunting scenes – are mentioned in the catalogue of the Hsüan-ho collection. Some of them were no doubt copies, others may have been originals. One of the former kind may have been the picture now in the Freer Gallery with an inscription in the manner of the imperial collector. It is a short scroll representing several men of a Central Asian type, leading three richly caparisoned noble horses. The picture is executed with great skill in rich colours, heightened with gold. The decorative effect is striking and the execution careful but not of very early date. It is typical of a number of similar compositions representing western men with one, two or several tribute horses.

Another type of horse-paintings described among the works of Han Kan represented them without saddles or trappings, frolicking and enjoying themselves in complete freedom. Su Tung-p'o describes two such pictures, one of fourteen horses, the other with four horses. The latter was composed as follows: "One horse stood on land with raised head and its mane disordered as if looking for something, stamping with its hoofs and neighing. Another was on the point of stepping into the water, the hind-part up and its head down, but bending round and

hesitating before completing the step. Two more horses were already standing in the water, one of them looking back as if speaking through its muzzle, but the one behind was not answering because it was drinking and consequently immobile. They were like stable-horses, though without the restraint of bridles or whip, and at the same time like wild horses with their sharply cut eyes and ears pricked up with excitement, strong chests and fine tails. Their behaviour was as fine as that of worthy officials and noble dukes when they meet and salute each other ceremoniously".¹

As said before, such grazing horses were often interpreted by the Chinese as symbols for noble men and high officials when freed from the cares of their official duties. But no horse-painting of the kind by Han Kan has to our knowledge survived.

The only picture nowadays generally accepted as a work by the master is the small ink-painting on paper (29.5 × 35 cm.) formerly belonging to the Kung family in Peking, but since more than twenty years in the collection of Sir Percival David in London. The quality of the picture is such that even the most critical connoisseurs have been inclined to see in it a work of the T'ang period (Pls. 99, 100). According to the inscription it represents the emperor Ming-huang's famous horse, The Shining Light of the Night (*Chao-yeh po*). The horse is a short riding-steed of the Mongolian pony type, without a saddle. It is haltered to a pole by a rope and making a violent effort to get away; its hoofs stamping, its mane flaming, its head lifted as if neighing sharply. The whole animal seems to be quivering with restless energy. But it is only the fore-part, the head and the neck, that transmits this impression; the back and the legs are weaker, probably because of some wear and retouching, and the tail is missing. The structural quality of the broadly synthesized form has, however, not been obliterated, and the sensitive life of muscles and the eye may still be enjoyed. The head reminds us of the finest

¹ This colophon by Su Tung-p'o is reported in *Ch'ing-ho shu-hua fang*, IV, p. 98.

horse-heads in clay from the fifth or sixth century; it has the quality of great sculptural art.

The earliest inscription on the picture is by the emperor Li Hou-chu (937-978) of the Southern T'ang state, but it is also inscribed with the names "Yen-yüan" and "Fei", which, however, must not be interpreted as signatures of Chang Yen-yüan (the critic of the ninth century) and of Mi Fei of Sung. There are other inscriptions by Hsiang Tzū-yen (dated 1138) and Wu Shuo (Wu Fu-pêng), likewise of the Southern Sung period. At the side of the painting are several colophons by literati of the Yüan period; and the emperor Ch'ien-lung has provided it with an autograph, in which he says that the picture was formerly in the Hsüan-ho collection and that he acquired it in the year 1741. In the meantime, according to Chang Ch'ou, it had belonged to the academician Han Ts'un-liang and to the Wên family. It has also been celebrated in an allegorical poem by Wang Yen (1227-1304).

In consequence of all these literary records, inscriptions and seals, which have been scrutinized by some of China's best connoisseurs of ancient paintings (and also by Japanese critics), the picture has acquired great fame as a work by Han Kan. To occidental students for whom inscriptions and literary records have less weight, it must remain more of a problem. But this, as said before, may be due to the fact that it is no longer in a pristine state of preservation.

Another small picture possibly likewise an original by Han Kan (if we may judge by the reproduction) was until recently in the Manchu Household collection (Pl. 101). It represents two horses, a dark one in front, and a white one behind, both caparisoned with fine bridles and saddles and restrained to a short walking pace by a stout, bearded groom who is seated on the white horse. The animals are not as fiery or restless as the "Shining Light of the Night", but characterized by slender legs, high arched necks and well-proportioned fleshy bodies, in other words, excellent specimens of those "Sages of the Stable Manger"

which Chang Yen-yüan mentions and which were sent to China from "Western countries" beyond the desert such as Ferghana and Sogdiana. The emperor Sung Hui-tsung has provided the picture with his seal and a beautiful inscription in which he calls it a true work of Han Kan. It could be enlarged into a great wall-painting without losing its artistic significance.

Small pictures such as the two last were certainly not counted among Han Kan's more important works; yet they transmit impressions of structure and life and of a degree of tactile beauty which make us realize that they must have been painted by a superior master. And, as said above, Han Kan was by no means only a horse-painter, he was also an excellent figure-painter, as may be observed in the impressively ugly groom on the white horse.

* * *

Ch'ên Hung, a man from Kuei-chi in Chekiang, must have been a little older than Han Kan. He was introduced at court in the K'ai-yüan epoch (713-742), and his artistic position must have been well established when Han Kan's great talent was recognized, because the emperor advised the younger painter to take the older one as his teacher, an order which, however, was not in accordance with Han Kan's own inclinations. We are told that Ch'ên Hung painted portraits of scholars and ladies, as well as horses and other animals, and that he several times was called upon to paint the august countenance of the emperors Hsüan-tsung and Su-tsung (756-763). Chang Yen-yüan says that "all the imperial portraits which he was commissioned to do were the best of the time". His "brush-work was vigorous and fluent, his style brilliant and original"; he was according to Chang "the only one after Yen Li-pên". Among his pictures are mentioned Ming-huang Sacrificing on T'ai-shan, and Ming-huang Hunting Wild Boar, Deer, Hares and Wild Geese, etc. But he also did paintings representing dancing figures, and religious subjects, Buddhist saints and Taoist doctors. He was what might be called

a character painter, not exactly a portraitist, in the modern sense of the word, but an artist who could transmit the character of his models through their types as well as through their gestures and attitudes, not to mention details of costume and attributes.

Ch'ên Hung's subtle art may still to some extent be perceived in a picture in the Nelson Gallery at Kansas City which, in spite of its rather worn and damaged condition, transmits the impression of an early work. It is a short scroll painted in rich colours on silk, which originally represented Eight Meritorious Officials (four civil and four military), but as two military men have been lost, only six figures remain. They are shown in three-quarter view, standing or walking, but there is no connexion between the figures; each one forms a separate picture and the characterization of the single figures is suggestive, in spite of the prevailing uniformity in their positions (PL.103).

The general impression of this scroll is one of remarkable decorative beauty owing to its rich colouring and refined execution which, in spite of considerable retouches, reminds us in places of precious old *kossu*.

Three colophons have been attached to the picture. The first one is written by the well-known painter Wên Chia and is dated 1579. He refers to the information about Ch'ên Hung in *Hsüan-ho hua-p'u* and points out that very few portrait paintings of the T'ang period have been preserved. He is not able to identify the figures. The second colophon is written by Chang Fêng-i, in 1596, who says that Ch'ên Hung may be compared with Yen Li-pên, etc., and adds some observations about the motifs besides high praise of the painter's brush-work. The third colophon is signed by the well-known writer and connoisseur Yüan Yüan (1764-1849), who together with six other scholars examined the picture at the request of the emperor. Their main concern seems to have been the identification of the figures, but they arrived at no definite conclusions.

A slightly younger man who may be said to have

belonged to the Han Kan following was Han Huang, tzü T'ai-ch'ung (723-787). His life is quite extensively reported in *T'ang-ch'ao ming-hua lu* and also, though more briefly, in *Li-tai ming-hua chi*, because of his prominent official career. He served as governor of Chekiang, as prime minister under the emperor Tê-tsung and as president of the Grand Secretariat, not to mention other posts, and was created Duke of Chin. But these various official occupations did not prevent him from devoting much time to calligraphy and painting and becoming famous in both arts. In the first-named of the above-mentioned chronicles he is particularly praised as a "depicter of farmhouses, popular *genre* scenes, secular figures and water-buffaloes". It is stated that the Duke of Chin was an unsurpassed master in representing oxen and asses; in other words, he enjoyed illustrating the life of the countryside and the domestic animals, which he represented with sympathetic understanding.

The handscroll known as *Wu-niu t'u* (The Five Oxen), which has been discussed in the literature but, to my knowledge, never reproduced, is an interesting example of this kind of rustic animal painting. J. C. Ferguson (*Chinese Painting*, pp.76, 77) mentions it twice, first as a work by Han Huang and then as a picture by Tai Sung and also gives the name of its present owner in Hongkong. To say definitely whether it should be called a Han Huang or Tai Sung may not be possible or necessary, nor am I prepared to classify it among authentic works of the period because I had only a hasty glance on it a few years ago. The five water-buffaloes are represented in various positions, seen from the front, in foreshortening, in full side view, or reclining. Each animal is a picture, or a separate study of the same animal in different postures, and the whole scroll a somewhat coarse realistic representation of the bovine motif.

The picture is executed with ink and light colours on a very unusual kind of rough hemp(?) paper which serves to emphasize the general impression of rusticity. Another version of the same picture is

preserved in a private collection in Japan, but as far as can be seen in a photograph, it is of later date.

The most important among the pictures traditionally ascribed to Han Huang is, however, of a different type. It is called *Wên-yüan t'u* and represents Four Scholars in a garden discussing some old writings. It is a portion of a scroll or a large album leaf on which the emperor Hui-tsung has written the title, the name Han Huang and the date 1107. This verdict of the imperial connoisseur has been accepted by many later experts and the picture has repeatedly been reproduced under the name of Han Huang on the emperor's authority. We have no means of either confirming or correcting this opinion even after renewed examinations of this interesting piece in Hui-hua kuan in Peking, where it was exhibited in 1954 (Pl. 102).

The motif as such is a favourite one in Chinese art; it has been treated by several prominent painters, but rarely with so much dignity as we find in this scroll. The composition is divided by a bending pine into two groups, the one consisting of two scholars occupied in examining a scroll of writing, while the other is made up of two standing men, the one leaning against the tree-trunk, the other against a rockery. The motif reminds us of Yen Li-pên's picture *Collating the Books*, but it is represented with more insistence on the individual figures. The tree and the rockeries transmit the atmosphere of an old garden, and the picture may thus be called a scholarly counterpart to Chou Fang's *Ladies in a Garden*, or *Listening to Music*. The composition seems also to have appealed in particular to a painter like Chou Wên-chü, who reproduced it as part of a scroll representing scholars in conversation with a monk, i.e. the *Lü-li-t'ang jên wu t'u* formerly in the Ti P'ing-tzû collection (cf. *Chung-kuo*, Pl. 23).

Other pictures by Han Huang, mentioned for instance by T'ang Hou, represented *Village-boys Playing with Ants*, *Drunken Scholars*, *Men with Big Bellies*, *A Drunken Guest*, etc., besides *Water-buffaloes* in various situations. It was said that his

human figures were derived from Ku K'ai-chih and Lu T'an-wei, but he must have been a rather independent artist with a keen eye for the actual world around him and *les faiblesses humaines* which he illustrated with some degree of humour. Yet his most immediate influence made itself felt in the field of buffalo-painting. His successor here was Tai Sung, the unsurpassed model of all later painters who devoted themselves to this no less exciting than substantial subject.

In describing Tai Sung's artistic development Chang Yen-yüan writes:¹ "When the Duke of Ch'in (i.e. Han Huang) was military governor of Chékiang, Tai Sung served as a local magistrate (or, according to other reports, personal secretary) and learned to paint from the Duke. He was skilled only in painting water-buffaloes, farmhouses and marsh-land views." This report is somewhat enlarged by T'ang Hou,² who writes that Tai Sung "surpassed his master 'as blue surpasses indigo'. He did not paint only cattle but also wonderful pictures of rivers and streams, trees and rocks, shepherds and woodcutters. I have seen altogether seven genuine works by him; the one which is in the house of Ssü Tê-yung in Yang-chou and represents two buffaloes fighting is exciting and terrifying. Another, which belongs to a scholar in Ssü-ming, represents a cow with its calf and is very remarkable. I have also seen the picture of three buffaloes crossing the water, and the picture of a buffalo returning with the herd-boy; they are all excellent works. People of former times said that (pictures of) domestic animals are not pure and enjoyable things for refined collections, but in these (the pictures mentioned) the pictorial interpretation (brush-idea) is refined and smooth. When one opens the scrolls the (old) ideas are suddenly there, and one feels the atmosphere of farms and rustic camps. I am very fond of Tai Sung."

T'ang Hou, who was an excellent connoisseur, had no doubt good reasons to be fond of Tai Sung's

¹ *Li-tai ming-hua shu*, Chapter X.

² In *Hua chien*, p. 4, edit. *Méi-shu t'ung-shu*, III, A. 2.

paintings in which the robust animals were represented in their proper surroundings with a penetrating realism that made the beholder feel even the smell of the countryside. His appreciation based on his own observations certainly is more valuable than the popular anecdotes about Tai Sung's fantastic skill which made it possible for him to depict the reflection of the herd-boy in the eyes of the buffalo and vice versa. Tung Yu refutes the story most decidedly in one of his colophons:¹

"Tai Sung's pictures of water-buffaloes are full of life and character. In *Hua lu* it is said that the eyes of the cow reflect the herd-boy and also that the herd-boy's eyes reflect the shape of the buffalo. When they are drinking or wading one can see the reflection of the animal in the water, where its lips and muzzle join with those of the image. I have seen several of Sung's paintings but no one like those mentioned in the *Hua Lu*. Considering the size of a buffalo and of a boy and that the pupils of their eyes are no larger than grains of seed, how could they contain the forms of a buffalo and a boy?

"Sung's paintings render the forms of the animals wonderfully, but they are not exceptional in other respects. He painted the muzzles moist and shiny, an extraordinary feat which no one else has been able to accomplish; nor has anyone else equalled him in representing the swiftness of their movements. Therefore Sung is said to have reached perfection in art. He was not an ordinary workman but originally a scholar who held the post of a magistrate in western Chekiang."

The only picture which here may be quoted as an example of Tai Sung's art as a bull-painter is of very small dimensions – a short scroll or large album leaf – but gives the impression of a genuine work (at least in the reproduction in *Li-tai ming-jên shui-hua*) (Pl. 104). The picture represents two magnificent water-buffaloes furiously fighting. The violent movement of the charging bull is convincingly interpreted: an extraordinary impetus seems to flow through the long, elastic body and find

its outlet, so to speak, in the sharp points of the curving horns. The other bull, which is wounded in the hind leg, is an equally excellent representative of bovine energy and pain. The picture bears what seems to be an authentic signature and two inscriptions by the emperor Ch'ien-lung, who in this case may be quite right in his confirmation of the traditional attribution. It must be admitted that this little picture corresponds well to what the above quoted critics had to say about Tai Sung's mastery in interpreting the nature of buffaloes.

The painting of horses and cattle evidently achieved great popularity towards the end of the T'ang period, and there were a number of skilful painters who devoted their best energies to these subjects. Several of them are recorded in *T'ang-ch'ao ming-hua lu*² and also in *Hua Chien*, but as no traces of their work remain, we will add only one more name to complete our account of animal-painting.

Wei Yen, who specialized in horse-painting, was apparently something of a wizard in his art; with careless sweeps of a worn-out brush he could make the *hua-liu* horses of Mu wang appear alive on the wall, if we may believe Tu Fu's exclamation. Chu Ching-hsüan also characterizes his manner as exceedingly free, his ideas as lofty and his nature as solitary, while T'ang Hou expresses a similar appreciation of the master in describing one of his horse-paintings: "The brush-work is vigorous and full of force, the hairs of the horse's tail can be counted. It looks like Yen Lu-kung's calligraphy. When last year Hsien-yü Po-chi saw this picture, he was deeply impressed and admired it for several days. Then he wrote the following lines of poetry on it: 'The marshy land produces dragons as well as horses; Wei Yen's way of painting horses is like his way of painting pines'. A striking comment which may have been fitting for the work of this strange painter.

¹ *Kuang-ch'uan hua-po*, IV, p. 61, edit. *Wang-shih hua-yüan*.

² Cf. Alex. C. Soper's translation of *T'ang-ch'ao ming-hua lu* in the *Archives of the China Art Society of America*, vol. IV.

Figure-painters and Portraitists

Chang Hsüan, Chou Fang and Li Chên

THE FULL-BLOWN beauty and dignity of the mature figure-art of the T'ang period, known to us from some excellent Buddhist sculptures and tomb figurines as well as through the wall-paintings in the Horyûji Kondo and the cave-temples at Tun-huang, are rarely found in still existing secular figure paintings, except as scattered glimpses or faint shadows. There was, however, no lack of able painters who attained to fame by portraits of emperors and dukes or by illustrations of noble ladies and the gay adventures of youth rather than by representing Buddhist divinities, but their works, which were done on silk or paper, have proved less durable than the paintings on the walls of the cave-temples. Very little of the source material for the study of secular figure painting remains today, and we are obliged to turn to copies and literary records when we try to obtain an idea of certain leading masters in this field. Yet in spite of the insufficiency of the material, we get impressions of a definite figure-style unlike that of any other epoch, expressive of ideals which never before or after dominated the pictorial art of China to the same extent. We may no longer be able to appreciate fully their significance, or the human background in which grandeur and misery were strangely mixed, but we may still pick out a few notes or features which reveal glimpses of T'ang culture in pictorial transformation.

The best known among the figure-painters of this period who, so to speak, gave final shape to the types and manners of the T'ang people were Chang Hsüan and Chou Fang. They did not belong to the

same generation – Chou was nearly fifty years younger than Chang – but they were both mainly active during the latter part of the eighth century and followed parallel roads.

Chang Hsüan, the older of the two, is rather scantily recorded in *Li-tai ming-hua chi* (Chapt. IX) together with Yang Ning and Yang Shêng, who both were active in the K'ai-yüan epoch (713–742). Yang Ning was appointed in 723 to a post in the Recorder's Office (*Shih-kuan*), whereas Yang Shêng may have been a little younger, since he is said to have painted portraits not only of the emperor Ming-huang but also of Su Tsung (757–762). He became, however, no less esteemed for his landscapes than for his portraits, as proved by the frequency of his name on copies after the kind of landscapes that we described as derivations from Chang Sêng-yu in an earlier chapter.

Chang Hsüan also did landscapes or garden scenes occasionally, but these were not his main subjects. According to *T'ang-ch'ao ming-hua lu*, he painted in particular "young nobles, saddle-horses and women of rank", but also "terraces, trees, garden flowers and birds", and was considered the most celebrated artist of his day, *i.e.* as a painter of beauty and grace in romantic surroundings. This also becomes evident from the titles of some of his recorded works as, for instance, *Young Bloods on a Night Frolic*, *Celebrating the Seventh of the Seventh Month in the Palace*, *Looking at the Moon*, *A Nurse Carrying a Baby*, etc., subjects which apparently gave full scope to his talent as a depicter of youthful charm. "To all of these

(subjects) he lent a wealth of suggestion that far exceeded any earlier versions."¹ In his note about Chang Hsüan (based on a study of at least ten pictures) T'ang Hou says that he "excelled in particular in painting young children, in which he was not inferior to Chou Fang"; to which he adds the remark that "all married women in his pictures have ears touched with red, by which they are distinguished (*i.e.* from the unmarried, who presumably were only touched with red on the lips); and this is something that the spectator must not neglect to observe".² Yet Chang Hsüan was not simply a painter of the little niceties of ladies or their ornamental refinement, like a precursor of Ch'iu Ying, he worked also in a more unrestrained spontaneous manner, if we may believe Chu Ching-hsüan's words: "He excelled in rough sketches and in bringing things out with a touch. The layout of his scenery with kiosks, terraces and trees, flowers and birds, was carried out to perfection."³

Both tendencies may to some extent be observed in pictures to which Chang Hsüan's name has been attached, even though they were executed in later periods. The best known among these is the handscroll in the Boston Museum, representing Women Preparing Silk, which, according to an inscription by the emperor Chang Tsung of the Chin dynasty (d. 1209), is a copy by the emperor Hui-tsung after Chang Hsüan's picture of Silk-beating (listed in *Hsüan-ho hua-p'u*). The statement is no doubt correct; it is fully borne out by the characteristics of the picture. The original has been rendered with the utmost care not only in its general lines, *i.e.* the well-balanced spacious composition, but also in every detail of costume and ornament, which makes it a precious historical document of the T'ang mode in apparel and deportment. But in spite of all faithfulness to his subject, the imperial painter has emphasized the meticulous neatness of the ornamental details and the mellow beauty of the olive green, light blue, orange, pale violet, fading rose and white tones and thereby no doubt made these exquisite ladies more puppet-like than they

were in Chang Hsüan's picture. They are all completely absorbed in the practical work or crafts connected with the preparing of silk: Some are pounding it in a trough, others are stretching it, while the lady who sits on the floor is winding up the silk-thread, and her companion on a low stool is busy with needle-work, but all these common everyday actions are accomplished with a gracefulness and dignity that gives them the air of a court performance, no whit less charming than the performance of a posturing dance to the rhythms of pipes and timbrels (Pls. 105, 106).

None of the other pictures commonly ascribed to Chang Hsüan is distinguished by a similar degree of feminine grace, but one or two should be mentioned as examples of his skill in handling numerous figures in a landscape. Most interesting in this respect is the fragmentary composition (in the possession of C. T. Loo's Successor in New York) said to be one of the five pictures listed in *Hsüan-ho hua-p'u* under the title *T'ang-hou hsing ts'ung t'u* (A T'ang Empress Returning from a Journey)⁴ (Pl. 107).

The execution of the picture may not be as early as the design, but what makes it uncommon and remarkable is less the brush-work than the characterization of the figures and the wide sweep of the composition. This is governed by a moving force that stirs and sways the whole assembly. The empress, preceded and followed by court officials, ministers and guards, is approaching on foot, but is moving on to a balustraded terrace with some haste owing to a sudden gust of wind which has ruffled her wide garments and long sleeves. The effect of this wind is also clearly observable in the fan-bearers, who have some difficulty in keeping their pole fans erect, and in the men who are walking in front of the

¹ A. Soper's translation of *T'ang-ch'ao ming-hua lu*.

² *Hua Chien*, p. 5 verso.

³ Soper's translation.

⁴ The picture is mentioned in *Ta-kuan lu* 1697, in *Mo-yüan hui-kuan* 1742, in *Chu-chia t'ang-hua p'u* by Li T'iao-yüan (1734-1803) by Omura in *Buffin Gwazen*, II, 5, and in the Kwen and Chang Ts'ung-yü catalogues.

main group. This struggle of the human figures against the wind lends a dramatic touch of the situation, which the painter has skilfully utilized in the characterization of the people. In his drawing of the single individuals as well as in the general design of the whole crowd he has realized the tension of the situation – the sudden outburst of the storm as the empress walks into the palace yard, and revealed a dramatic talent of representation which Chu Ching-hsüan may have had in mind when he wrote of Chang Hsüan: "He excelled in rough sketches and in bringing things out with a touch".

Another elaborate composition with a great number of figures in a garden landscape, is known as *Kuo-kuo fu-jên yü-ch'ün t'u*, i.e. the Spring Party of Lady Kuo-kuo. It is reproduced in *Chung-kuo ming-hua chi* and looks like a fragment of a larger picture. The title of the picture is written in the manner of the emperor Hui-tsung and it corresponds to one of the items on the list of Chang Hsüan's works in *Hsüan-ho hua-p'u*, but to judge by the far from satisfactory reproduction, it can hardly be executed before the Ming period. The motif is inspired by current stories about the enjoyments and adventures of Lady Kuo-kuo, a second sister of Yang Kuei-fei and no less famous for her beauty and dissipations than her elder sister. It shows a party of young women gathered in open pavilions and galleries or dancing on a terrace to the tunes of a small, ladies' orchestra. Motifs of this kind seem to have been used for idealized renderings of romantic tales transplanted into the court circles at Ch'ang-an during the reign of the emperor Ming-huang.

Chou Fang's pictorial *œuvre*, which was produced after the close of these frivolous days, when rebellions and aggressive neighbours had broken the hegemony of T'ang rule in the Far East and opened the way for poverty and discontent, reveals altogether a heavier mood and a more pensive approach to the human subjects than we find in Chang Hsüan's paintings. Chou Fang had also a predilection for upper-class feminine models, but he did not represent them in gay surroundings, on

excursions, revelling or dancing, but isolated, on a neutral background, absorbed in very quiet homely occupations, resting from their embroidery or needlework, tending babies, playing chess, listening to the *ch'in* (table harp) and so on. And even when they are moving, they do it very quietly, without haste and with no effort or excitement that might disturb the scene.

According to *Ming-hua chi* Chou Fang (who used the *tzü* Chung-lang and Ching-yüan) started by imitating Chang Hsüan's paintings but gradually developed a style of his own. He specialized in the manners and bearing of noble ladies, or, to use T'ang Hou's expression in *Ku-chin hua-chien*, "women of rich and opulent beauty with an air of being wealthy and noble", i.e. women of that opulent appearance which became the mode in the decadent years of the T'ang dynasty and who never seem to lose their air of pensive serenity. And, as said above, he also found occasion to express this kind of ripe feminine beauty in the guise of benevolent Bodhisattvas. He was employed by the emperor Tê-tsung (780-804) to execute wall-paintings in several temples in the capital, such as Hsing-t'ang ssü, Shêng-kuang ssü, Ta-yün ssü and Kuang-fu ssü, and it is significant that the most famous of all his religious paintings was a representation of the Benignant Bodhisattva of Water and Moon, i.e. Kuanyin seated at the sea-shore with the moon reflected in the water.

In the *T'ang-ch'ao ming-hua lu*, where Chou Fang is accorded a very high place on the scale – next to Wu Tao-tzū and above Yen Li-pên he is praised in particular as a master of Buddhist paintings (some of which aroused extraordinary interest among the citizens in the capital), but also as the best portraitist of the time, a statement supported by the tradition about two portraits of vice-president Chao Tsang, executed by Han Kan and Chou Fang respectively. When the gentleman portrayed showed the two pictures to his wife, asking her to point out the better of the two, she said: "They are both like Mr. Chao, but the first

(Han Kan's picture) represents merely his outward appearance, while the latter (Chou Fang's picture) transmits his personal character, Mr. Chao's real nature, the expression of his smile and his words"; a verdict which caused Mr. Chao to send several hundred rolls of silk to the painter.¹ Chou Fang's popular fame as the greatest painter of the time seems to have reached even beyond the frontiers of the Middle Kingdom, if we may judge by the statement in *T'ang-ch'ao ming-hua lu* according to which a man from the Silla kingdom in Korea came to China in the Chêng-yüan epoch (785-805) and "bought up at good prices several dozen scrolls there (by Chou), which he carried back to his own country". They represented Buddhist and Taoist figures as well as secular subjects.

Chou Fang's versatility as a figure-painter is also substantiated by the titles of some of his pictures transmitted in the above-mentioned chronicles as well as in *Hsüan-ho hua-p'u*. The following may here serve as examples: The Five Planetary Rulers, The Three Officials of Heaven, Earth and Water, The Four Heavenly Guardians, The Guardian with the Pagoda, Confucius and his Ten Disciples, Confucius Asking about Ceremonies, Ming-huang Riding on Horseback, Yang Kuei-fei Stepping out of the Bath, President Hsin's Banquet, The Flying of the Kite, Ladies on a Spring Walk, Ladies on a Summer Excursion, Ladies with Fans, Ladies Preparing Tea, Ladies Making Music, Ladies Playing the Flute, Ladies Playing the *Ch'in*, etc. Pictures illustrating occupations of noble ladies are the most numerous among the recorded works of Chou Fang and they have always been highly appreciated and were often imitated by painters of subsequent ages.

Whether any of these pictures still survive in the original is a question that can hardly be answered in a definite way, but the best of so-called Chou Fangs may be of the period and form a rather homogeneous group representing more or less clearly the style of a master. One of the earliest of these pictures is probably the large handscroll exhibited in 1954 in Hui-hua kuan in Peking (Pl.108).

It is badly worn, the drawing of the figures is blurred at certain places, and the colours have largely sunk into the silk or worn off, but the picture has escaped repainting and has preserved an air of authenticity which makes it interesting. The subject seems to be a scene from the women's apartment in the imperial palace or some princely dwelling. The main person is a lady who sits in an easy posture in a low armchair, while a tall eunuch is moving the air with a large fan on a long handle. She seems to be watching the other women, who are occupied in adjusting their garments and coiffures, or in work at an embroidery frame, or are bringing in a large object which may be a *ch'in* (table harp) enveloped in a silk cloth. The details can only be discerned in part, but the general character of the figures, their types and bearing, the soft fullness of their forms emphasized by the draping of their loose garments and their leisurely movements, all contribute to the impression of a definite style, which also may be observed in a number of somewhat similar pictures ascribed to Chou Fang, though probably executed at later periods.

Among these other traditionally attributed pictures may be pointed out in particular the fragment of a handscroll in the Freer Gallery representing two ladies playing the kind of chess known as Double Sixes. They are seated on low stools at both sides of a small table, and behind them stand two younger women watching the game. These are the main groups, both practically immobile, except that the hands of the players are in slow movement, but the onlookers as well as the players fascinate us by their complete absorption in the situation. The latter are lost in the game, the former tongue-tied by curiosity and watchfulness. Neither of them pays any attention to the two maids at the other end of the picture, who are using all their strength to bring in a large bronze kettle of hot water(?) (Pl.109). The whole thing is very simple, there is no indication of a stage or an interior, no accessories or furniture except the chess table and the low chairs, but through the

¹ This story is repeated in *T'u-hua chien-wên chih*.

placing of the figures a spatial extension or depth dimension is convincingly suggested. The picture is based on close observation of nature, and it is rendered with a remarkable feeling for the psychological import of the motif, its intimacy and fine-drawn tension.

Another remarkable composition in the form of a handscroll, which may be said to contain the essentials of a work by Chou Fang, is known as *Listening to Music*. It exists in various editions, which shows that it must have enjoyed great popularity. The best version is probably the one in the Nelson Gallery in Kansas City; three others were reproduced by Lo Chên-yü in the pamphlet called *Erh-shih chia*. The artist has here succeeded in depicting the influence of music even on a figure seen from behind. The *ch'in* player is seated on a flat stone block under a blossoming tree, touching the strings of the instrument with her slender fingers. The audience consists of two other ladies seated on low stools and two maids, who are approaching from the two opposite ends of the composition. The most expressive of these figures is the lady who is seen from behind, leaning over as if drawn towards the *ch'in* player by the strains of music (Pl. 110).

The garden is reduced to two thin trees and the large stone on which the musician is seated, but it is enough to localize the event and to create the impression of a spring eve when the magnolias are in bloom and the air is scented. The wide intervals between the figures do not seem to isolate them, but rather to emphasize the enchanted silence of the listeners. The motif has, so to speak, been detached from the material restraints common to it in Western presentations of a corresponding kind and has thereby reached a more spiritualized or timeless significance. The actual execution of the picture may not be older than of the Sung period, but it seems like a faithful rendering of the master's own intentions.

It is particularly regrettable that none of Chou Fang's famous portrait-paintings has survived, because he seems to have been a master of psychological

characterization and in this respect more akin to Western painters of the Quattrocento than most Chinese artists. If figure-painting had continued in China along the lines indicated in the art of Chou Fang it might have led to the creation of portraits somewhat like those of early Renaissance masters.

The scattered fragments of Chou Fang's pictorial art and influence which have survived make us realize that he was a keen observer of human nature with a faculty for bringing it out by transmitting definite states or moods arising from intellectual or musical occupations. We have seen it in two or three examples, and the titles of many of the recorded but no longer existing pictures are further evidence of this tendency.

Chou Fang must have exercised considerable influence on his contemporaries as well as on the following generation, as will become clear particularly through our study of Chou Wên-chü. But the same mode and style of figure-painting may also be observed in some anonymous pictures from the end of the T'ang period, which should be recorded at this place as typical examples of the somewhat over-ripe aestheticism of the final T'ang mode.

One of the best among these anonymous paintings of young ladies has survived in the fragments recovered by Aurel Stein from a tomb in the cemetery of Astana, near Kara-Khodja, in the Turfan district. They are assigned on circumstantial evidence to the first half of the eighth century, but represent practically the same kind of feminine types and mode as we have seen in Chou Fang's pictures. A full description of these fragments and an attempt to reconstruct the original picture of which they formed parts, was published by Laurence Binyon,¹ who arrived at the conclusion that they all formed parts of one scroll which was divided into several sections representing women standing or seated under trees, playing on musical instruments or enjoying the performances of dancers and singers. He calls the whole picture *A Musical Festival* in

¹ In *The Burlington Magazine*, June 1925 and in *Innermost Asia*, III, p. 655.

Honour of Spring, a title that gives the most poetic interpretation of the subject. The close connexion with a picture such as Chou Fang's above-mentioned Listening to Music is too obvious to need any further comment.

There is also an obvious stylistic relation between these ladies from the cemetery at Astana and the female beauties, standing or seated under trees, which are represented on a six-fold screen in Shosoin. This famous screen, which is dated in the year 752, may have been done by Chinese or Central Asian artisans (Pl. III). The figures are not paintings in the proper sense of the word, but ink drawings originally filled out and modelled with feathers of various colours which nowadays are almost entirely lost. Consequently they are lacking in the element of colour that lends charm and freshness to the paintings from Astana, but they represent the same ideals of type and design.

Here should also be mentioned a drawing of a young woman which was presented to Sven Hedin when he visited the Turfan oasis in 1896. According to the inscription it was done as a family record without artistic pretensions, but it is nevertheless distinguished by a definite style and excellent brush-work (Pl. III). It is in this respect superior to the small pictures representing figures standing under trees, accompanied by pages, brought from Kara-Khodja by the Japanese explorer Count Otani, one of which is pasted on a sheet of paper with the date 716.

* * *

Li Chên was a contemporary of Chou Fang but has remained practically unknown in his homeland. His name does not appear in any of the old records of the history of painting in China and would probably have been completely forgotten, were it not for the fact that some of his works were brought to Japan by Kōbō Daishi, the well-known founder of the Shingon sect, on his return from China in 804. The pictures, which represent Five Patriarchs of this mystic school of Buddhism, have ever since been preserved in the temple treasury of Tōji in Kyōto,

the main temple of the Shingon sect in Japan, and some of them are provided with explanatory inscriptions by Kōbō Daishi.¹ Besides these five portraits by Li Chên, there are two more, to complete the set of seven, but they are distinctly inferior in quality and probably the work of an imitator rather than by Kōbō Daishi himself as is claimed by tradition.

In spite of the fact that the pictures are much damaged – three of them being so badly worn that the figures are hardly visible – they still make a profound impression. They are quite large (84 × 60 cm.), and unadorned but very dignified, not to say monumental, like great wall-paintings. Each one consists of a single figure seated with folded legs in a meditative posture on a low square dais. The rather uniform design is only in one case supplemented by the addition of a servant, who stands in a reverent attitude at the side of his master. The names of the respective Indian and Chinese patriarchs are written in very large decorative script above or at the side of each figure, and below them are broad strips of historical inscriptions still partly readable.

The best preserved of the portraits is the one which represents the Indian monk Amoghavajra (Pu-k'ung Chin-kang). He is wearing a black (now somewhat greyish) cloak and sits on a straw-coloured mat on a dais which has beautifully ornamented red borders and legs. The colours are toned down by age and wear, the silk is very fine and has a soft light brownish hue. The man, who is sitting with his hands clasped before his chest, is turned in half profile (like all these figures); the dais is almost parallel to the plane of the picture, yet represented as if seen from the side and from above.

¹ According to *Kokka* (No. 198, p. 494), the following passage occurs in Kōbō Daishi's *Shūrai-rika*: "The reverend Divine (the Chinese from whom he had received instruction) informed me that the secrets of the doctrines of the Shingon sect could not be conveyed without the aid of pictorial representations. Thereupon I brought home with me sixteen artists, including Li Chên, and had them draw different sacred figures."

According to *Sakai Bijutsu Zenshu*, vol. VIII, p. 56, the artist is mentioned together with Chou Fang in *Sai-ŭ chi* (Records of temples and pagodas).

In this way the full horizontal extent of it lies open to view and is made to function, so to speak, as an indication of a spatial unit in which the figure appears as a fully developed three-dimensional form. One might speak of two directions or lines of movement in a picture like this, the one from the top downward (also accentuated by the writing at the side of the figure), the other from the front towards the back, i.e. inward, as suggested by the view under the platform, where the monk's slippers attract our attention.

The sculpturesque quality of the figure is brought out by the firm synthetic drawing – particularly in the bony head and the clasped hands – and by the modelling of the deep mantle folds, which are shaded in various grades of black. With these highly restricted pictorial means the artist has succeeded in creating a picture which reminds us of the best wooden portrait statues preserved in Japan, such as the blind Guanyin (in Tōshōdaiji) or the stern Roben (in Tōdaiji). They too represent stylistic traditions of the T'ang period and become individually expressive through their powerful heads and the visionary characterization of their gaze, which is turned either inward (behind the closed eyes) or outward with searching force, as in Li Chên's picture.

In two of the other portraits it is less the main figure than the accessories that may still be seen. The one representing Hui Kuo, Kōbō Daishi's teacher, seems to have been exposed to more wear and tear than the others; the patriarch on the dais is now hardly more than a grey shadow of his original form, but the servant in a long white gown who stands with clasped hands at his side, is still quite well preserved. The very delicate drawing together with the white colouring make this simple figure particularly attractive. The whole thing is a pale shadow with a faint spark of monumental art. A detail of interest in most of these portraits is the slippers or shoes of the patriarchs which are placed below the

chairs; they add a note of intimacy and serve at the same time to enhance the impression of a third dimension.

In the portrait of the patriarch Shan Wu-wei, the slippers are in the form of a pair of red *geta* with black strings and they are placed prominently between the beautifully carved legs of the dais. Beside these there is, just in front of the stool, a large bronze ewer with a dragon-shaped handle of typical T'ang shape.

The historical importance of these portraits can hardly be exaggerated. They are the only ones of their kind still surviving from the T'ang period, the only grand specimens from an epoch when this kind of monumental figurative art reached its full development in China. We know it to some extent from the best contemporary specimens of religious sculpture, but the pictures which at least in part represented the same style and spirit, such as the wall-paintings by Yen Li-pên, Wu Tao-tzū, Yang T'ing-kuang, Chou Fang and others, are all lost.

Li Chên was not, as said above, one of the leading masters of his time. He was not as dynamic as Wu, nor as subtle as Chou Fang. He was apparently more of a conservative traditionalist, and his art represented a stage in the stylistic evolution which probably had been reached by the more progressive painters almost a hundred years earlier. But this conservatism does not make his works less important to us. On the contrary, they may be said to reflect impressions or elements of the T'ang mode in figure-painting at a relatively early stage when it was characterized by a more severe dignity and more plastic strength than in later times. There are, to my knowledge, no pictures which – *mutatis mutandis* – so readily invite comparison with great sculptures as these, and none which answers to the term "monumental", with all that it implies of structural design and economy of means, better than these pictures which, in spite of their ruined condition, still provoke some visions of the T'ang mode.

The Five Dynasties Period

Growing Decentralization. Rise of Ch'an Buddhism and Ink-painting

THE BRILLIANT artistic culture of the middle T'ang period, brought about by some of China's greatest poets and painters, was never fully revived, even though the dynasty was re-established in 756 after the rebellion of An Lu-shan, and continued its reign for another 150 years, i.e. until 906. The power of the imperial house was gradually weakened through a series of revolts by local governors, who had established themselves almost as independent rulers in outlying provinces, and also through wars with border tribes, such as the Tibetans, whose disastrous occupation of the Chinese capital in 763 was mentioned in a previous chapter. The efforts of some of the military commanders led to intervals of peace, but the coherent force of the ruling house was waning and the provincial governors grew more and more truculent. The rebellion which broke out in 881 under the leadership of Wang Hsien-chih and his successor, Huang Ch'ao, spread gradually over the whole country and became the signal for the downfall of the T'ang dynasty. The third leader of this rebellion accepted, to begin with, the authority of the imperial house, but as soon as an opportunity offered, he had the last scion of T'ang put to death (906) and founded a dynasty at Lo-yang under the name of Liang, but this did not last for more than sixteen years, and its rule was limited to a minor central section of the empire.

This so-called Posterior Liang dynasty was followed by the Posterior T'ang, which lasted for twelve years to 935. Then came the Posterior Chin until 946, and the Posterior Han until 950, and finally the Posterior Chou until 960, the year which

marked the end of the Five Dynasties period and the foundation of the Sung empire. But while these five dynasties followed each other in rapid succession at Lo-yang and Pien-liang (K'ai-feng), independent governments of a more stable kind were established in other parts of the country: the Liao kingdom in the north with its capital at Yen-ching (Peking), the Shu kingdom in the west with its capital at Ch'êng-tu (in Szechuan), and the Southern T'ang kingdom in the south-east with its capital at Nanking. These independent states, which have no place in the main line of official dynastic periods in China, are well worth remembering in this connexion, because their capitals offered safer refuges for the artists than the imperial court. Ch'êng-tu and Nanking in particular became during this troubled period important centres of artistic activity where great painters worked under the patronage of the local rulers.

The political revolutions had, no doubt, a considerable influence on the state of the fine arts, but still more important in this respect were the changes in the field of religion and philosophy. The poets, who spread a never fading romantic glow over the reign of Ming-huang – and even after that, though in a sadder tone – were followed by prose writers of a more philosophic and moralizing type. Men like Han Yü (768–824) and Liu Tsung-yüan (773–819) were no longer inclined to transpose reality into poetic metaphor. Han Yü was the classic representative of the Confucian state-philosophy. His memorial to the emperor on the subject of Buddha's bones (published in 819) opened the way for the reaction

against this all-powerful religion and led, at least indirectly, to the serious blow of 845.

The subsequent declining fortunes of Buddhism during the last century of the T'ang dynasty, when it was more or less superseded by Taoism in official quarters, were noted in a previous chapter,¹ and also how the old schools of Buddhism were transformed in the process of nationalization and partly replaced by more romantic and mystic forms of religion. Most important among these, particularly for the further development of painting, was the meditative school, known as Ch'an or Dhyāna, said to have been introduced into China at the beginning of the sixth century by the previously mentioned Indian patriarch Bodhidharma who, even if he were not exactly the individual described in Chinese legends and depicted in hundreds of paintings, was a teacher of great consequence who left deep impressions on the Chinese mind. The growing influence of the meditative school was furthermore facilitated by its resemblance to certain older currents of Chinese thought. It was in harmony with the Taoist tenets according to which spiritual illumination, or the knowledge of Tao, could be obtained only by relieving the mind of all kinds of intellectual dross and opening it to the spiritual illumination from universal rather than individual sources. With its individualistic character and tenets of introspection it fitted into the same grooves as Taoist practices and became a sort of last resort to the Chinese, particularly at a juncture when the more speculative forms of monastic Buddhism began to show signs of decay.

The popularization of the Ch'an school seems to have started with the Sixth Chinese patriarch, Hui-nêng, at the beginning of the eighth century. He is said to have explained the founder's teachings in "discussions", but according to other authorities this change took place only at the end of the T'ang period, when Ch'an had divided into a number of local branches or centres of teaching. "At this time, it seems that Ch'an books were written in the colloquial language and contained many vulgarisms.

Thus the conceptions of Ch'an, formerly known only to the upper classes, were spread also among the common people",² which indeed may have been a result of the general disintegration of the old forms of culture which took place at this time. The dominating position of the Buddhist clergy as well as the authority of the central government had been severely shaken. New leaders rose among the common people; independent governments were gradually formed at ten or more places, culture, religion and art were no longer exclusive matters of hieratic organizations or of court circles, they reached broader layers of the population. The changes in the general cultural background were important and far-reaching; they became manifest also in the field of painting, even though this was limited to certain local schools, whereas the general undercurrent in the development of Chinese art remained undisturbed by the new aesthetic theories. In other words, traditional forms of painting were continued and perfected along well-established lines, but certain new schools and manners of painting grew up in addition to these, attracting for the time being much of the creative energy that formerly had been directed into more conservative channels.

Most remarkable in this respect was the development of monochrome ink-painting, which from this time onwards became a favourite medium of the Chinese painters. There had certainly been excellent ink-painting before, but it had not been so common and exclusive as it now became. Most of the great painters of the T'ang period used pigments in combination with ink and conceived their works in colour rather than as monochromes. Wang Wei may to some extent have been an exception to the rule, as suggested by a tradition according to which he sometimes worked in ink only, but if we may draw some conclusions from the pictures nowadays associated with his name, colour held an important place in his art also, and his aim was rather to depict

¹ Cf. The historical introduction to the T'ang period.

² Cf. Kōnan Naitō, *Bukkyō Bijutsu*, November 1929.

actual scenery than to give free pictorial transpositions of traditional motifs.

The development of monochrome ink-painting was probably to no small extent a result of the same spiritual impetus as brought about the growth of Ch'an Buddhism. Painting of this new type became more widely diffused and at the same time more individualistic than the earlier forms of pictorial art, which had been more closely dependent on time-honoured aesthetic conventions. And it was a kind of painting that allowed the most immediate realization of the intuitive vision, the sudden spiritual experience, which also was the aim of Ch'an practices. The manner of expression became thus no less subjective than the manner of apprehension, for it depended largely upon the quality of the brush-work, and this again revealed the character of the individual. It not only demanded the highest degree of concentration and of skill in the handling of the brush, it was not only a form of painting that spurred the artist's dexterity as well as his faculty of observation; it was in its last degree and to those who had full command of it, a revelation in itself. Some of the old critics seem to have realized this and therefore found it necessary to establish a special class or grade for the most spontaneous or unrestrained manner of monochrome ink-painting practised at this time. They called it *i*, employing this appellation for those who transmitted their conception of the inner significance of things quite independently of conventional rules, simply led by their own genius. The correspondence between this kind of painting and the Ch'an methods of developing the intuitive faculty of comprehension is obvious and will be further elucidated in our discussion of the great masters at the end of the Sung period, who developed ink and brush to perfect instruments for transmitting flashes of intuition or visions. Their way of painting was actually a form of Ch'an practices. The first attempts of this kind were made at the end of the T'ang and the beginning of the Five Dynasties' period.

Another feature characteristic of the artistic

activity at this time was the growing decentralization. In matters of art as well as politically, China became divided up into various sections or centres which were more or less isolated and where the cultural life flourished quite independently. One of the most important of these independent centres was the kingdom of Shu beyond the mountain ridges in far off Szechuan. This had been a place of refuge for the T'ang emperors, when they were forced to leave their capital before the intruding hordes of revolutionary leaders. Artists and writers followed in their wake, and gradually in Ch'eng-tu, the capital of Shu, there grew up an important school of painting. And as this has been well recorded in special chronicles, such as the *I-chou ming-hua lu*, we are comparatively well informed about the painters of Shu.

Another important centre of artistic activity was Nanking, the capital of the Southern T'ang kingdom, which lasted until 975, when it was absorbed into the Sung empire. Religious painting had always had a stronghold in this part of the country, but as we shall find, secular figure-painting as well as landscape and flower-painting also underwent an important development in Chiang-nan towards the end of the tenth century. The last ruler of the Southern T'ang state, Li Hou-chu (Li Yü), was one of the most accomplished art-lovers that ever occupied a throne. When he lost his kingdom, he became a wandering poet until his death three years later.

In Central China conditions were less favourable for the development of arts and letters. Here, at the imperial capital, changes of the ruling houses, revolts and outrages followed in rapid succession. None of the five dynasties which, as mentioned above, claimed imperial prerogatives, was able to maintain its power for more than fifteen years, the shortest existing only four years, but they all established their court at Pien-liang (K'ai-feng) and tried, when conditions permitted, to keep up an air of artistic culture. Several prominent painters, particularly among the landscapists, worked in the capital, preparing the way for the great school of

landscape-painting which reached its culmination during the first century of the Sung dynasty.

The short period named after the Five Dynasties thus marked a sort of transition in the field of painting between the formal traditions of T'ang and the stylistic ideals of the early Sung time. It is as a matter

of fact hardly possible to draw a line of demarcation between the two periods, particularly as the activity of some of the great painters extended over both of them. The types and styles of painting which usually are labelled as Sung were to no small extent developed in the time of the Five Dynasties.

Figure-painting in the Five Dynasties Period

I.

The Masters of Shu: Kuan-hsiu, Sun Wei, Shih K'o and others

THE ORIGINAL paintings preserved from this epoch are not as rare as the pictures from the T'ang period, yet they are extremely scanty in proportion to the great number of painters and pictures recorded in the historical chronicles. The above-mentioned *I-chou ming-hua lu* contains the biographies of over fifty painters in Shu, and this was only one of the centres of art. At this distant place painting seems to have remained relatively conservative, several of the T'ang painters having found their way there from Ch'ang-an, when the political conditions in the capital became too uncertain, and forming schools which lived on during two or three generations. Thus from the ninth century there were three families of painters who worked particularly for the temples, to wit, the Chao (Chao Kung-yu, Chao Wên-ch'i, Chao Tê-ch'i), the Ch'angs (Ch'ang Ts'an and his son Ch'ang Chung-yin), and the Kao (Kao Tao-hsing, Kao Ts'ung-yü, Kao Wên-chün, and his sons, Huai-chieh and Huai-pao, who worked in the Sung period). Their works were to a large extent wall-paintings, and no traces of them remain. We may consequently pass them over and instead direct our attention to another painter of Buddhist subjects, who also settled in Shu and whose art may still be studied in paintings which at least in part bear the imprint of a definite original style.

His family name was Chiang and his personal name Hsiu, *tzü* Tê-yin and Tê-yüan, but he became popularly known as Kuan-hsiu and also, later in life, as Ch'an-yüeh ta-shih. He was born in 832 at Chin-hua in Chekiang and placed in a Ch'an monastery to be educated as a monk.¹ He made

rapid progress in the study of the scriptures, but at an early age also showed his talents as a poet and a painter. From his native country he went to Yü-chang (Nan-ch'ang), the capital of Kiangsi, and there, in the Yün-t'ang ssü, painted a series of Arhats (mentioned by Kuo Jo-hsü); then he resided in Pei ching tê ssü in Fu-chou, where he also painted some Arhats. At the age of sixty-three he went with an official mission to the ruler of Wu-yüeh in Hang-chou, and there too in the Shêng-yin ssü, a series of eighteen Arhats by the master were shown in later times. In the year 896 Kuan-hsiu, who then had become well known all over the country, came to the court of a local ruler at Ch'ang-sha (Hupei), and though he was also received there with great honours, he had the misfortune of being involved in political troubles and was obliged to leave the country. He escaped (901-903) to Ch'êng-tu, the capital of the Shu kingdom, and was now hailed as a great poet and teacher. The ruler bestowed upon him a purple mantle and the title Ch'an-yüeh ta-shih (The Great Master of the Ch'an Moon), the name under which he is usually mentioned. He died in 912, eighty-one years old.

Beside the three or four series of Arhats by Kuan-hsiu mentioned above, several other pictures of a similar kind are recorded in certain temples in Canton, Shao-hsing (Chekiang), Ch'êng-tu, and

¹ Kuan-hsiu's biographical data are related in *Sung kao-t'ung chuan*, Chapt. XXX, and translated by Chavannes in his article "Les Seize Arhats, Protecteurs de la Loi", in *Journal Asiatique*, Sept.-Oct. 1926. Some additional information in *I-chou ming-hua lu*, III, pp. 3, 4.

Peking.¹ They may not all have been originals by the master, but they increase the evidence of his fame as a painter of Arhats. In this respect Kuan-hsiu stood in a class of his own; he created a definite type of such holy men, strange and weird, more expressive of dynamic force than of peaceful harmony. And this type held its own in Chinese art at least into the Yüan period, in spite of the fact that Li Lung-mien (at the beginning of the twelfth century) introduced another more Chinese Lohan type which gradually reached great popularity. The almost violent expressiveness and highly imaginative character of Kuan-hsiu's Arhats seem to have appealed particularly to the adherents of Ch'an Buddhism.

The 'extraordinary appearance of Kuan-hsiu's Arhats is vividly described by Huang Hsiu-fu in *I-chou ming-hua lu* (written before 1005), who also gives some hints about his artistic derivation in the following paragraph: "The people of his time considered him another Huai-su.² As a painter he followed Yen Li-pên. His Sixteen Lohans had bushy eyebrows, large eyes, hanging cheeks, and high noses. They were seated in landscapes, leaning against pine-trees and stones. They looked and behaved like Hindus or Indians. When someone asked where he had seen such men, he answered: 'In my dream'. He also painted Śakyamuni's ten disciples in a similar fashion. The people found his pictures very strange, but his pupils treasured them highly. He was often asked to write poetry, and such writings of his may still be seen, but they cannot be acquired. At the beginning of the T'ai-p'ing-hsing kuo era (976), when the emperor T'ai-tsung searched everywhere for old pictures, Ch'êng Yü, who then ruled over Shu, made the emperor a present of Kuan-hsiu's Sixteen Lohans."

Kuan-hsiu's name is traditionally attached to several series of Lohan pictures, now in Japanese collections, but it is doubtful whether any of them are his original works. Those which correspond most closely to the above description are the pictures belonging to Kōdaiji in Kyōto. The figures in these

pictures are placed at the foot of trees, seated on rocks, that is to say in surroundings which correspond to the general character of the strange-looking, grim old men, who are anything but Chinese. According to the temple records, the pictures were brought from China by the priest Shunjo in 1211,³ and were considered as Kuan-hsiu's works, but the chances are that Kuan-hsiu's famous compositions existed at that time already in copies executed by skilful imitators. The Kōdaiji pictures have thus a considerable historical interest, even though not executed before the twelfth century.

More important from an artistic point of view, and more difficult to date, are the very impressive pictures of the Sixteen Arhats which formerly belonged to Baron K. Takahashi in Tokyo, but now are the property of the Imperial Household. They are more archaic not only in design but also in execution than the Arhats mentioned above, but unfortunately in a very ruined state of preservation. Most of them are, as a matter of fact, so crudely redrawn or repainted, particularly in the heads and the upper parts of the figures, that they appear almost like caricatures. The artist may indeed have felt a need to depict the Arhats more as symbols of hoary age and endless meditation than as human beings, but their ugliness, the distorted features and misproportioned bumpy skulls have no doubt been violently emphasized in the repainting. Nevertheless there are two exceptions to this general impression, two paintings which evidently are less restored than the others. One is the so-called self-portrait of the painter, the other represents an Arhat seated on a rather high stone ledge, while his *geta* are placed below the seat. He is wearing a green mantle over a reddish brown garment and leaning somewhat forward. The posture is rather free and easy, and the full face with the very narrow eyes below the bold

¹ Cf. Chavannes' article, pp. 280-283.

² Huai-su, a Buddhist priest of the seventh century, who was a famous writer of grass characters.

³ One of them is reproduced in Fenollosa, *Epochs of Chinese and Japanese Art*, I, p. 142, others in *Shimbi Tai kan*, vol. VI and in *Kokka*, No. 253.

skull is of a Chinese rather than a foreign type and expresses a definite individual character (PL113).

The individualization is even more marked in the so-called self-portrait of the painter, though the picture has suffered by some repainting. Here too the type is Chinese, though the nose is uncommonly prominent for a Chinese and the thick lips are accentuated by a moustache, i.e., the same kind of shading as on the eye-brows. The eyes have apparently been redrawn, but the regard seems to be fixed on a listener, while the lifted hand emphasizes the expression of attention or teaching.

The reason why this picture has become known as the self-portrait of Kuan-hsiu is not simply to be sought in the markedly individual character of the plump face and the "speaking" gesture, but also, and still more, in the inscription on the picture. Unfortunately this is in a fragmentary state since several characters have been worn away, but it has been reconstructed by Japanese authorities partly with the support of an old stone-engraving of the picture,¹ and may be translated as follows:

"The Sixteen Lohans in the Huai-yü shan (temple) at Hsin-chiou. Ten pieces were sent in peacefully on the ninth day of the ninth month of the first year of the Kuang-ming era (880). On the twenty-third day of the third winter month of the first year of Ch'ien-ning era (894-98) I continued the former ten pieces at Chiang-ling. Sixteen years have (thus) elapsed between. Now (at this time) the Ch'an monk Ching-chao from the North has come to see me and has asked for the pictures. He will take them this year to Huai-yü. Written by the monk Kuan-hsiu from Hsi-yüeh."

This inscription, which is obviously contemporary with the painting, lends additional support to the conclusion that these Lohan pictures are the works of Kuan-hsin. They were painted for a temple on Huai-yü (or Yü) shan at Hsin-chiou in Kiangsi; the work was begun in 880, when ten pictures were done. When these had been finished, the painter seems to have moved elsewhere; the work was discontinued and not resumed until 894

at Chiang-ling in Hupei. The remaining six pictures were then taken from there by a travelling monk to the Huai-yü shan temple.

The information regarding the gradual accomplishment of the whole series and the interruption of the work for nearly sixteen years may also serve to make the unequal quality and character of the paintings more comprehensible, and these inequalities have apparently been accentuated in the process of more or less thorough restorations. The figures which have been most ruthlessly restored can thus hardly be said to transmit impressions of Kuan-hsiu's original manner, whereas the two last mentioned examples may still be accepted on stylistic grounds as characteristic works of the period, most likely executed by the famous monk painter.

This series may be said to hold a place of its own in the history of Buddhist painting in China, but there are also other Arhat paintings ascribed to Kuan-hsiu which, though of later date, are no less interesting from a stylistic point of view. Among these may be mentioned the pictures in the Asano, Fujita, and Muto collections, which are fairly uniform and probably parts of one series.² They are related to the preceding series in so far as they also represent the holy men as excessively strange-looking creatures, worn by age, seated in endless meditation under withering old trees, but the actual execution is quite different. These latter pictures are not coloured but painted with ink only in a very broad and fluent manner of the kind that became known as *p'o-mo* (broken ink) style. In accordance with this certain parts, such as the faces and the hands and accessories, are rendered with a thinner or lighter brush, while the garments are painted with a very broad, not to say coarse, brush. The manner is sketchy and abridged in the same way as we shall find in the works of some later painters who adopted the *p'o-mo* technique.

Kuan-hsiu's historical importance has been rated

¹ Cf. T. Akiyama's essay in *Nihon Bijutsu Ronko*, p.391 and T. Kobayashi in *Chü koku Kaigashi Ronko*.

² Cf. *Kokka* 406 and 436, and the Muto Catalogue, Pl.12.

very high during the centuries; he is described by the old critics as the founder of a special school or current of religious painting in China, and his name has been freely used for paintings of Arhats and other Buddhist characters of more or less startling appearance. Pictures ascribed to him are still quite numerous, particularly in Japan, and though they show considerable variations in quality and execution, they are all marked by very strange faces and dried up bodies. Here may be recalled the so-called Kuan-hsiu paintings in Seiryōji (Kyōto) representing Sixteen Arhats which, according to old temple records, were brought from China in 1211. Their stylistic connexion with the afore-mentioned paintings is not very close, though they may be classified as derivations from such models.

Kuan-hsiu was, however, by no means the only one who at this crucial time exercised a decisive influence on Buddhist painting in China. There were other painters active in the imperial capital and other places of central China who followed a different lead and drew their inspiration mainly from the still remaining works of Wu Tao-tzū, the greatest of all the Buddhist painters of the T'ang period. Some of his monumental wall-paintings were still to be seen at the time; others survived in copies or stone engravings which offered an opportunity to younger masters to study his grand compositions and strangely effective draughtsmanship. Most of the later Wu followers were hardly more than trained artisans who executed the commands of the temples for icons and wall-paintings, but there were also exceptions, i.e. men of outstanding talent and considerable importance who transmitted the tradition with individual variations far into the Sung period. It seems doubtful whether any original works by these men still remain, but their style may be observed in old copies and their artistic creations are described by the biographers.

The most prominent among these traditionalists during the third quarter of the tenth century was Wang Kuan, *tzū* Kuo-ch'i; a man from Loyang who was active in the time of the first two Sung

emperors. His great artistic reputation rests mainly on the fact that he was able to do such perfect imitations of Wu Tao-tzū's pictures that he became known as "the Little Wu". According to the records about the painter, reported by Liu Tao-ch'un in *Shêng-ch'ao ming-lua p'ing*, he was a handsome boy who from early years showed great aptitude for painting, but as he came from a poor family, he could not have the advantage to study with a teacher. He found, however, an excellent substitute for this in certain wall-paintings by Wu Tao-tzū in a Taoist shrine on the Pei-mang mountain which was dedicated to Lao-tzū. Kuan went to see these pictures very often and stayed in the shrine even when it was bitterly cold and the snow was deep. Such pictures as were covered by dirt and dust he brushed and cleaned carefully, trying to discover the original designs more clearly. "In this way he assimilated the real style of the pictures, and did not stop at this but transformed it by leaving out the weak points and appropriating its merits." His fame spread rapidly over the whole country; princes, dukes and high officials who possessed some paintings by Wang Kuan considered them precious treasures. Towards the end of his life he was commissioned by a minister to do some wall-paintings in Chao-pao ssū and received for these a handsome remuneration. There was no painter in the Ch'ien-tê and K'ai-pao era (963-975) superior to him according to Liu Tao-ch'un.

No original work by Wang Kuan has, to our knowledge, become known, but his close dependence on the Wu Tao-tzū tradition as well as certain individual characteristics may still be observed in three later imitations after his paintings (now in the National Museum in Stockholm). The pictures form a kind of triptych, each representing a bearded man seated at the entrance to a grotto, which serves as a frame and a background to the figure. The side figures are placed on a crouching lion and an elephant, respectively, and thus definitely marked as the Bodhisattvas Mañjuśrī (Wên-shu) and Samantabhadra (P'u-hsien), and both are turned in half profile towards the central figure, a man with a long

beard seated full face on a high cliff which rises on stone pillars out of a whirling stream. At the side of the figure on the cliff is a small basket and in his lowered left hand a willow branch, i.e. attributes which in conjunction with the seat, rising out of the water, and the bamboos in the background, make it plain that the figure represents Kuanyin (Avalokiteśvara) in the rather unusual shape of an old man. It is, however, quite in conformity with the well-established Buddhist iconography to find Kuanyin accompanied by Wên-shu and P'u-hsien. According to our interpretation, the pictures may be taken to represent the three most popular Bodhisattvas in the guise of rugged old men of Hindu type, a form of representation that is quite rare in Chinese art and here used in a way which bears witness to a very original conception by an independent artist.

The pictures have no signature, but several seals, one of them reading: *Chia-yu yü-pao* (Imperial Treasure of the Chia-yu reign) (1056-1063), and on the margin of the P'u-hsien picture is a lengthy inscription by the well-known statesman and collector Wêng T'ung-ho, dated 1886. He tells how he saw the picture in an old bookshop in Liu-li ch'ang in Peking on the day of the Full Moon Festival in 1882. He acquired it for 100 taels and kept it hanging in his study. Two years later (1884) a monk from Hsiang-kuo ssü visited him and told him that the picture was formerly in the collection of this temple and, according to the temple tradition, a work by Wang Kuan of the Sung period. And he said furthermore that it originally formed part of a set of three pictures which he described. Wêng T'ung-ho then tells how he looked up Wang Kuan in the books and found that he was a man of the Ch'ien-tê period (936-967) of the Sung era, and how two years later a friend of his called Shao Po-ying, brought him two other pictures of the same set, which caused rejoicing.

Wêng T'ung-ho's inscription, which relates to the temple tradition regarding the origin of the pictures as well as to his own opinion, adds historical interest to them considerably and makes it probable

that they represent works by Wang Kuan, even though executed at a later date. The probability of the tradition is also strengthened by the style of the Bodhisattva figures; without difficulty we recognize in them the same kind of drawing of the wide garments, the same dominating wavy rhythm of the accumulated mantlefolds, as we know from some of the stone engravings of Wu Tao-tzū's typical figures such as the well-known Kuanyin standing on billowing water. In other words, the three Bodhisattva figures contain elements and illustrate features of style which were originated by Wu Tao-tzū, and may thus be described as products of the Wu Tao-tzū tradition, though here combined with features of later origin such as the bamboos and the tree-branches, which are more characteristic of the fifteenth than of the tenth century. A similar date is also made probable by the execution with ink and white colour on paper, yet with all this the pictures retain a fundamental element of style which connects them with a tradition that survived not only through the Five Dynasties and the Sung but also in the Yüan and Ming periods.

Liu Tao-ch'un's high esteem of Wang Kuan as a painter finds final expression in the following words: "According to my opinion Wang Kuan was one of the foremost among the various painters who have been active in the present dynasty. The reason for this was that he expressed his own ideas freely and did not stiffen in certain formulae. He freed himself from the faults of earlier painters and developed such merits as could serve as guidance for his successors. He should be placed in the highest class."

No less significative are the words of appreciation by a younger contemporary called Wu Tsung-yüan, who became one of the leading masters at the end of the tenth century and the foremost representative of the Wu Tao-tzū line, which earned for him too the appellation the "little Wu". He is reported to have said: "When I see Kuo-ch'i's (Wang Kuan's) paintings I have no longer any need of the works by Wu Tao-tzū. Wu painted too hastily; his fairies have coarse necks and a halting gait, his trees and stones

are superficial and not in proper mutual proportion. Kuo-ch'i avoided such faults; everything in his paintings is properly done and his colours are very clear. No artist of old or modern time was his equal. I regret indeed that I did not have the chance of being instructed by him."

The words reflect Wu Tsung-yüan's strong attachment to the same artistic tradition as that represented by Wang Kuan, and from the little we know about him it appears that in the early Sung era he became one of the most influential men in the field of religious painting. According to the biographical information transmitted in *Hsüan-ho hua-p'u* and by Kuo Jo-hsü he was born and educated in a family of scholars at Pai-po in Honan, and through the protection of influential friends he was made, when only seventeen years old, Master of Sacrifices in the Confucian temple. As an official he rose to the position of Vice-president of the Department of Parks, Lakes and Mountains and was repeatedly entrusted by the emperors Chên-tsung and Jên-tsung with important artistic commands, particularly for the decoration of newly-erected Buddhist and Taoist temples in the capital. In the Shang-ch'ing kung he painted the Thirty-six Heavenly Rulers and represented the Red Emperor of the South with the face of T'ai-tsung, the father of Chên-tsung, because fire was the special element of the Sung house. So that when the emperor Chên-tsung visited the Shang-ch'ing kung and saw the figure, he exclaimed in astonishment: "This is really the late Emperor!" He burned incense in front of the image and paid honours to the marvellous picture.

Wu Tsung-yüan, who was a man of high social standing, often received in his house noblemen, great scholars and high officials, i.e. friends, who also were interested in art and anxious to become the owners of some of his pictures. Among these friends was a wealthy tea merchant by the name of Kao who during a period of ten years often visited Tsung-yüan and repeatedly asked the artist to do a picture for him of Kuanyin Bodhisattva seated by the seashore. Finally Tsung-yüan consented to do the

picture, but it took him three years to finish it. When the work actually was finished, he took it to the house of the merchant, but on arrival he was informed that the man had died. He simply burned the picture; wept bitterly and left the house.

We are also told about other Bodhisattva paintings executed by Wu Tsung-yüan and furthermore about his share in the decoration of the Yü-ch'ing chao-ying kung (a Taoist temple in the capital which had been constructed in 1008). On that occasion all the painters were called to the capital so that the best could be selected for decorating the walls in the new temple. Out of about 3000 painters who on this occasion gathered in the capital only one hundred were selected for the execution of the work, and these were placed under the supervision of Wu Tsung-yüan. He thus became responsible for the whole artistic decoration of the temple, a position which greatly increased his authority among the painters.

Most of Wu Tsung-yüan's works were no doubt wall-paintings executed on a large scale in colour, and it seems also most probable that the long handscroll which exists in various versions (and monochrome reproductions) was intended to be executed as a wall-painting in a Taoist temple. It has become known under the title of the Five Heavenly Rulers or the Eighty-seven Immortals; the rulers referred to are the personifications of the four main directions and the centre of the universe, i.e. the Blue Emperor of the East (Ch'ing-lung), the Red Emperor of the South (Chu-chüeh), the Yellow of the Centre (Chilin), the White of the West (Po-hu), and the Black of the North (Hsüan-wu), but only three of them are clearly marked in the main version of the composition known to us. These powerful potentates with all the paraphernalia of the Heavenly Kings of Taoism are the main personages in the long cortège which moves in slow pace along a winding bridge or terrace with a low railing. Herculean guardians in armour with swords and spears form the head and the tail of the procession, which includes celestial dignitaries and hosts of heavenly maidens, some of them carrying

tall insignia such as streamers, fans and embroidered banners, or large flowers and plates of fruits, while others are making music on many kinds of string and wind-instruments. The crowd is proceeding to the slow and dignified measure of the celestial hymn, played by the musicians; the unifying rhythm is reflected in the waving folds of the trailing garments and floating scarves which form the whirling and billowing streamlets in the sweeping flow of the procession. The figures are brought together in freely moving, yet well-unified and compact groups (so characteristically Chinese), which endows the whole procession with an air of solemn grandeur – an impression which may well be said to carry our thoughts to Wu Tsung-yüan's ideal, the unattainable Wu Tao-tzū.

The design, as described above, is known through several replicas or reproductions with minor variations. The earliest version is said to exist in private possession in New York, but as it had not been made accessible to students in 1954 I cannot express any opinion about its merits. But a good substitute for the picture is offered by the collotype reproduction of the scroll which was published a few years ago in Japan. Two sections of this are here communicated in half-tone prints. They may serve to transmit an idea of the quality of the linear drawing which is the life-nerve of this magnificent design and which still seems to preserve something of the grand manner and irresistible flow that made Wu Tao-tzū's creations so highly admired.

Among later reproductions of the same design should be mentioned the scroll published in recent years by the Chinese government and which is based on a somewhat modified version of the picture formerly in the possession of the well-known painter Hsü Pei-hung, who has written a colophon to the painting in which he praises its artistic merits and tells about its changing fortunes. Two sections of this are reproduced on our Plate 119 (included as substitutes before the other photographs reached us from Japan); they may be of interest from an historical viewpoint as comparative material – even though executed at a later date. The same general design is

furthermore repeated in the picture (in two sections) belonging to the Metropolitan Museum, which likewise should be remembered as an historical evidence of the fame of this monumental composition in later times.

There was evidently some reason for T'ang Hou's characterization of the painter in the following words: "Wu Tsung-yüan was the Wu Tao-tzū of the Sung era. He painted human figures with running brush-strokes which were like flowing water, and his divine use of colours was very lively. I have seen his Portraits of Ancient Emperors with their insignia, *viz.* the picture in which he represented the emperors and sovereigns of the five cardinal directions in groups. Their imperial garments and the expression of their eyes were most life-like."

★ ★ ★

The reports on Shih K'o's life and work are not as extensive as those on Kuan-hsiu, yet quite sufficient as evidence of the fact that he too was a most extraordinary, not to say eccentric, person. The earliest information about him is the following in *I-chou ming-hua lu* by Huang Hsiu-fu (published 1005): "Shih K'o, *tzū* Tzū-chuan, was a man from Ch'eng-tu. He was reckless as a youth, but when he grew older he became famous. He received a good literary education, but his mind was bent on painting. He painted (to begin with) figures of a traditional kind, following the style of Chang Nan-pên. There are the following pictures by him: The Farmers' Gathering, The Divine Tortoise, Opening the Mountain Pass, The Ten Great Friends of T'ang, The Great Yü Regulating the Waters, The Five Planets, The Constellations of the Dipper, The God of Longevity, The Three Religions, The Three Celestial Sovereigns, The Five Rulers of Taoism, etc. There was always a satirical note in his paintings." (In addition to these pictures some wall-paintings in the Buddhist and Taoist temples in the capital are also mentioned.)

The above notes are further elaborated and completed in the description of Shih K'o's life in *Sheng-*



FIGURE 18. Two sections of a scroll-reproduction of Wu Tsung-yüan's design known as The Five Heavenly Rulers.

ch'ao ming-hua p'ing (composed by Liu Tao-ch'un in the first half of the eleventh century). The impetuosity of his character is particularly stressed by the statement that "he liked to shock and insult people and composed satirical rhymes about them, not unlike those of the comedy actors, some of which are still repeated. First he followed Chang Nan-pên, but after he had studied painting for a few years, he surpassed his teacher. He mostly represented old and rustic fellows of strange appearance and grotesque shapes so as to shock the proud and pretentious. The people of Hsi-chou were much annoyed at him . . . (A few of the above-named picture-titles are repeated.) . . . His life-breath (*ch'i-yün*) was vigorous and resolute, and he was much praised at the time. There are still many pictures by him preserved in Shu and Ch'in (Szechuan and Shensi) as well as in the imperial collection."

The same characterization of Shih K'o as a man and a painter is repeated in *Hsüan-ho hua-p'u* (published 1126). He is said to have painted mainly Taoist and Buddhist figures, starting as a faithful follower of Chang Nan-pên, "but as his talents developed, he became increasingly eccentric and untrammelled (*tsung i*) and did not submit to any rules". These fundamental features and the fact that he by preference treated grotesque shapes and strange forms made him appear quite extraordinary. "When the Shu kingdom had submitted to the Sung emperor, Shih K'o went to the imperial capital and was ordered to do some wall-paintings in Hsiang-kuo ssü. He was also appointed to a post in the Academy of Painting, but did not accept it; he asked leave to return to Shu, which was granted" – but he is said to have died on the way home.

The above text is, as far as I know, the first in which Shih K'o is characterized by the term *i* (meaning: untrammelled or unrestrained) which ever since the end of the T'ang period had also been used for the designation of a particular style or class of painting. It appears about the middle of the ninth century in T'ang-ch'ao ming-hua lu as a sort of addition to the three common classes of painting,

shên, miao and *nêng*, and is used to indicate painters "who are completely unrestrained by rules", three such being named, to wit: Wang Mo, Chang Chih-ho and Li Ling-shêng, all three excellent landscape-painters in the so-called *p'o mo* manner.

This kind of painting seems to have become particularly popular in Shu in the tenth century, Huang Hsiu-fu places the *i* class above the other three classes (*shên, miao, nêng*), because, as he says, "painting in the untrammelled (*i*) style is most difficult; those who follow it are not skilled in the use of compasses and squares for making circles and squares. They despise refinement and variegated colouring and draw the forms quite abridged (*sketchy*), but they grasp the natural spontaneously (*tsü jan*). It is not like expressing ideas in a formal manner; therefore it is called the untrammelled style."

Before we turn to paintings ascribed to Shih K'o it seems necessary here to insert some information about Sun Wei, the great master who is placed by Huang Hsiu-fu and other early historians at the top of the list of the Shu painters. His art had a wide range and his personality must have been exceptionally dynamic, which may have been the principal reason why he was considered an ideal representative of the *i*-class.

Like Kuan-hsiu he came from Chekiang (K'uai-chi) and the two equally strange and influential masters must have been practically of the same age. He worked in his early years in Ch'ang-an but followed the imperial court in 880 to Shu; he settled in Ch'êng-tu and was commissioned to execute wall-paintings in many temples. Kuo Jo-hsü says about Sun Wei that "he was good at painting secular figures, dragons in water, pines and rocks, and ink bamboos, but excelled also in representing Heavenly Rulers and demon divinities. His brushwork had a sort of wild strangeness; he was not particularly successful in the use of colours. The wall-paintings by him in Ch'ang-an and in Shu were real masterpieces."¹

¹ Cf. Soper's translation of Kuo Jo-hsü's *T'u-hua chien-wên chih*.

The characterization of Sun Wei's creative strength and manner of painting is still more definite in *I-chou ming-hua lu*, where we are told that he painted the Heavenly Rulers and their armed retinue with such intensity that one could hear their tumult, but "creatures like geese and dogs he would do with three or five strokes of the brush, and things like bow-strings and axe-handles he would sketch in as accurately as if he were following a marking line". The dragons he painted with endless variety and gave them the appearance of starting off to soar. "In the pine-trees, stones and ink bamboos the brush-work was refined and marvellous and the life-breath bold and vigorous beyond description in words."

It is interesting to note that Sun Wei did not confine himself simply to the broad and dashing manner of painting that was the favourite medium of Kuan-hsiu and Shih K'o; but was also a master of the refined and delicate brush-work appropriate for certain motifs. But whatever technique or method of painting he used, it was ancillary to his vigorous temperament and exuberant *ch'i yin*.

With these strongly marked individual characteristics he corresponded perfectly to the definitions of the *i*-class painters, and as such he could treat every kind of subject in whatever brush-manner that seemed to him most appropriate for the case. He was pre-eminently a figure-painter and executed a large portion of his work on temple walls, but he earned also particular fame as a painter of seascapes. Têng Ch'un mentions him in *Hua Chi* (1167) in the following context:

"Among the painters in the *i*-style Sun Wei was the foremost. Later painters sometimes worked in a still more wild and loose manner. Shih K'o and Sun T'ai-ko may also be placed among them, but they could not avoid the coarse and the vulgar. As to Kuan-hsiu and Chao Yün-tzū and their followers, they were impulsively rash, their intentions were often noble but they always fell into the vulgar."

Here too Sun Wei is praised as the only one of the painters in Shu who never lapsed into any vulgari-

ties even though he was of the untrammelled class (which could not be said of Shih K'o or Kuan-hsiu).

In later years and particularly after Su Tung-p'o had directed attention to Sun Wei's paintings of "rushing torrents and raging waves breaking against rocks and twisting around mountainous shores, adapting themselves to the shapes of the barriers", and called him, because of this rare faculty, "a divine master", Sun Wei became regarded as the greatest among the landscape-painters from Shu. This appreciation is well expressed by T'ang Hou in 1329 in *Ku-chin hua-chien*: "The painters of Shu all regarded Sun Wei as their master. Dragons and water were the subjects in which Sun Wei excelled. It is commonly said that Sun Wei painted water, while Chang Nan-pên painted fire. Water and fire are actually inanimate objects, but both gentlemen understood deeply the *raison d'être* (principle) of these elements. I have seen Sun Wei's painting representing the fishes and dragons of the Water Palace appearing and disappearing in the billows of the sea, while spirits and ghosts are manifesting themselves in various forms in the Milky Way. It makes the spectator tremble – it is a mighty work."

Sung Wei was thus in the Sung period placed almost on a level with those great traditional masters of the middle T'ang era whom we have discussed in previous chapters. He may have been of a rather different kind of temperament, but he continued the classic tradition in religious as well as secular figure-painting. This is, however, only to a minor extent brought home by the large handscroll now in the new art museum in Shanghai. The picture is popularly known as *Kao I t'u*, the title written on it by the emperor Hui-tsung, and has been identified with the scroll in the *Hsüan-ho hua-p'u*, called The Four Grey-heads, i.e. the four worthies who at the close of the reign of Ch'in Shih-huang-ti, in despair at the disorders of the state, retired to the Shang mountains, whence they came forth after the establishment of the Han dynasty and were then made officials of state under the empress Lü. The

picture seems to refer to this last stage in the story of the scholars, because they are all seated on colourful rugs in a kind of garden landscape, each one accompanied by a servant bringing such amenities as food and drink in ornamented bronze vessels, scrolls of writing, and a *ch'in* instrument. The scroll is thus composed of four separate groups of equal importance, for the garden rocks and shrubs which are placed at certain points can hardly be said to connect but rather to frame them. The mode of presentation marks a long step forward if compared for instance with Yen Li-pên's scroll compositions, yet it still retains elements of what might be called archaistic isolation. The artistic progress is more evident in the characterization of the single figures than in the design as a whole. The four gentlemen who, strictly speaking, are no grey-beards, but middle-aged men with black hair and beards, represent four individual variations of that sharp-witted energetic type that can still be observed among people from Ch'êng-tu. Their individual temperaments are reflected in their postures and movements as well as in their features. They are all placed on square mats by which the horizontal plane is successfully indicated, but these are not all exactly on the same level and the figures are depicted in more or less momentary postures, i.e. speaking, gesticulating, turning at the waist and so on. The garments are wide with long undulating folds which flow down from the shoulders and spread on the carpets around the figures, giving them dignity and weight; they emphasize their movements and plant them firmly on the ground. The well-controlled sinuous lines are the principal means of expression, the colours are ancillary to the drawing of the figures. The garments are light in tone, partly almost transparent, but the carpets are thick and painted in deeper tones. They give the impression of a continuous horizontal plane or stage, which is screened by a few isolated trees and garden stones (Pls. 124, 125).

It would be interesting to know whether the attribution of the picture by the emperor Hui-tsung

to Sun Wei, was simply a confirmation of a tradition, or whether he had some particular reasons for his opinion. There are no seals or inscriptions of earlier date which could be quoted in support of the attribution; only a late colophon (dated 1489), signed by a man called Ssü-ma Tung-po. There can hardly be any doubt that this remarkable scroll was considered in the Sung period as a masterpiece by Sun Wei, but whether this actually was the original picture or a perfect copy (like some other of Hui-tsung's early masterpieces) is difficult to tell without a closer scrutiny of the scroll than I could make in the museum.

* * *

Shih K'o's fame in the history of Chinese painting is based on other qualities than those which made Sun Wei stand as *primus inter pares* amidst the painters in Shu. Shih K'o earned his popularity through his wit and satire, expressed in paintings or drawings, just as much as by his skill as a man of the brush. This is well expressed by Li Chien in *Hua-p'in*,¹ when he describes Shih K'o's picture representing The Court of the Jade Emperor and some other mythological subjects. The description is too long to be quoted in full but the following extract may serve our purpose:

"Shih K'o was a highly independent character; always mocking and making fun of his contemporaries. His manner of painting was bold and free and he had no consideration for rules and patterns. That is why his figures sometimes are so hideously strange and queer. He painted some of the officials of the Water Palace with crabs and fishes attached to their belts in order to shock the people who looked at them. I have just seen a picture by him, of an old man and woman tasting vinegar; they are holding their noses and squeezing their mouths to show its bitterness. I have also seen his picture of Chung K'uei with his wife seated at a table laid with wine, fruits and food, while the servants are standing

¹ Li Chien's *Hua-p'in*, reprint in *Wang-shih hua-p'ian*, vol. 10, p. 43.

around in expressive attitudes, with attentive miens, and several dozens of small devils are gambolling and making music; all most wonderful. In the painting of the Jade Emperor he did not dare to introduce so many playful things, yet he could not refrain from representing the crabs hanging (from the girdles) so as to make people of later times laugh."

The only still existing pictures attributed to Shih K'o which are distinguished by a somewhat extraordinary individual quality are the two sections of a large scroll belonging to Shohoji in Kyōto, known traditionally as Two Patriarchs with their Minds in Harmony. They represent two rustic philosophers seated on the ground steeped in profound meditation, the one leaning on a tiger, the other half naked, bending forward and supporting his bearded chin on his hand. The figures are rendered with broad washes in an extremely free, dashing brush-manner. Their mantles are reduced to some patches of light and shade, the heads and naked parts are indicated with light outlines, yet they stand out as fully realized plastic forms. The pictorial execution may be said to correspond to the idea of meditating Ch'an patriarchs, who are seeking the sudden flash of spiritual illumination. They are utterly detached from the material world; their forms exist only as symbols of their minds.

A closer examination of the pictures makes us realize that they are no longer in a pristine state. On the contrary, they are much repaired and the outlines are partly retraced or filled out. This is most evident in the picture of the man who is leaning on his hand; when seen in a strong light it appears as if the figure had been joined to a new sheet of paper. The relatively patchy and uneven manner of execution may have been emphasized by the repairs, yet even with some allowance for such posterior modifications, it is evident that the brush-work must have been from the beginning exceedingly sketchy, evoking the impression of flickering shadows or torn rags rather than of bodily forms in neglected or insufficient cloaks, but

certainly expressive of the painter's *ch'i yün* (life-breath) and transmitted by his impetuous brush (Pl. I18).

The signature and date (963) have been refuted by several competent Japanese critics, who have shown that neither the inscriptions nor the seals are of the time of Shih K'o, but they may possibly be explained as free imitations after Shih K'o.¹ The manner of execution corresponds more or less to the descriptions of the painter's brush-work by some of the old historians. Significant in this respect are the following words by T'ang Hou in *Hua chien*: "In painting human figures he played with the brush (*hsi pi*), rendering their faces, hands, and feet according to the rules, while the garments with their folds were done quite roughly".

This combination of a somewhat careful traditional manner in certain parts of the figures with a more sketchy or rough brush-work in the garments seems to have been characteristic of Shih K'o as well as of other *i*-painters. The same thing was pointed out in connexion with our study of the ink-paintings of Lohans ascribed to Kuan-hsiu, which also may serve as historical documents, even though they are copies (possibly even later than Shih K'o's Patriarchs). The following remarks by the Ming painter Li Jih-hua are in this respect most informative:

"Kuan-hsiu painted the garments with thick ink in sweeping and rough strokes so that they looked like water-plants floating on the waves, and the general shape of the Lohan was accomplished with ten strokes of the brush. But in painting the face, the fore-arms and the wrist he used the iron-wire manner. His brush-work was abbreviated, yet inspired and extraordinary."²

This description of Kuan-hsiu's ink-paintings is essentially the same as the previously quoted definitions of Shih K'o's brush-work. They must

¹ The pictures have been discussed by Tanaka Toyozo in *Tōyō Bijutsu Tanisō* and still more thoroughly by Shimada Shujirō in the article "On I-p'ui, the Extraordinary Style of Chinese Painting", in *Bijutsu Kenkyū*, 161, 1950.

² Quoted by Shimada from *Liu-yen ch'ui-pi ch'i*.

have followed parallel lines in their use of the *p'o mo* technique in figure painting.¹ This had, to our knowledge, previously been used only in landscape-painting – for instance by Wang Mo and Chang Tsao – but as it corresponded pre-eminently to the general attitude of some of the *i-p'in* painters in Shu, it was adopted by them and developed into a brilliant medium of expression in figure painting too.

Our review of some of the painters who were active in Ch'êng-tu at the end of the ninth and beginning of the tenth century may have brought home the fact that the school of painting in Shu was a remarkably virile and independent centre of creative activity. The men who formed this school were, however, not all natives of Shu; some of them had travelled there at mature age to find refuge when life in the devastated and plundered capital became too precarious for artists. Yet they were all absorbed in the atmosphere and stimulating influences of the distant province.

Our descriptive remarks have been limited mainly to painters whose names are attached – *per fas et nefas* – to still existing pictures, but it may be recalled that according to *I-chou ming-hua lu*, the Ch'êng-tu school included more than fifty painters, some of them mentioned in the preceding pages even though no works by them have been identified. The best figure painters beside Sun Wei, Kuan-hsiu and Shih K'o seem to have been Chao Yün-tzū, Sun Chih-wei and Chang T'u, who all worked in a more or less unrestrained manner, though they did not reach the level of the three first-mentioned painters.

The special importance and characteristics of all these men seem to have been due to their common endeavour to free themselves from the traditional restraints of formal methods or rules and to give expression to their own *ch'i yin*, i.e. life-breath, in the most untrammelled and independent way. This is emphasized by most of the old critics who have paid some attention to the Ch'êng-tu school, and it led Huang Hsiu-fu, the author of *I-chou ming-hua lu*, to set up a special superior grade or category

(above the three usual classes) which he called *i-p'in*, and which according to his view should be reserved for the geniuses or Sages of painting. The technical method that best corresponded to the requirements of the *i-p'in* painters was no doubt the so-called *p'o mo* manner which as a rule consisted of sketching with light ink and then painting across with deeper, more luminous ink. But the technique permitted modifications according to the individual temperaments or needs of the painters. It was by no means simply an expressionistic play with light washes and an easy brush. Some of these painters like Sun Wei drew their trees and figures with a fine brush and neat outlines, yet with the spontaneous force and decision that transmitted the life-breath before it was lost in empty formulae or too closely representational images. In other words, there was no hard and fast method at the service of every painter of the *i-p'in* class, because his main endeavour was to express the enduring character or significance of each motif convincingly.

¹ The word *p'o* in the expression *p'o mo* is written in Chinese texts with two different characters (Mathews 5344 and 5356), pronounced almost in the same way (both aspirated) but having somewhat different meaning in modern usage; the first is usually translated "broken ink", the second "spilled" or "splashed ink". The different meanings of the two terms have perhaps not always been kept strictly apart. The painter Shên Tsung-ch'ien (of the Ch'ien-lung epoch) explains in his treatise *Chieh-chün hsiieh hua pien* that the first method consisted in sketching outlines with light or pale ink and then gradually adding on parts with darker ink, so as to bring out an effect of strong relief, whereas painting according to the second method is started with a design in dark ink, by which all the forms are clearly defined, whereupon the empty spaces are filled in with grades of lighter ink or coloured washes. The first-named method was used particularly by landscape painters of the "Southern School". The second method was, broadly speaking, one of tinted washes, while the first implied the successive additions of darker tones (as for instance in Wên Tung's bamboo-paintings). But it is evident that both methods were subject to evolution and gradual modifications, the *p'o mo* technique of the Tang landscapists Wang Mo and Chang Tsao, mentioned by Chang Yen-yüan, was not exactly the same as that of Kuan-hsiu or Shih K'o, nor did Mi Fei or Liang K'ai and Mu-ch'i follow strictly in the footsteps of these predecessors, though they all used similar means to increase the expressiveness of their pictures, i.e. by adding on darker tones by sweeping strokes, dots or splashes over a groundwork in lighter ink which could be left visible or "unbroken" in spots.

II

The Masters of Nanking: Ku Hung-chung, Chou Wên-chü, Wang Ch'ï-han and some Contemporaries

FIGURE-PAINTING of an intimate kind, or what nowadays would pass under the name of *genre*, was cultivated with increasing interest and success during the short but artistically very fertile period named after the Five Dynasties. Something of the kind existed already at the end of the T'ang era, as we have seen in the *œuvre* of Chou Fang, but it was now further perfected and developed into a more intimate illustrative art which found its motifs not only in the ceremonial life at court but also in the more unconventional habits of scholars and women and children of various grades.

One of the most important centres of this kind of painting was in Nanking, the capital of the Later T'ang and (finally) of the so-called Southern T'ang state which survived fifteen years after the Sung dynasty had united all the other minor states in the new imperial dominion. The ruling house of this posterior T'ang realm, which changed three times during the first half of the tenth century, succeeded, by adoption, in keeping up a semblance of legitimate succession to the great Li family of T'ang, and this helped to spread some lustre over the court in Nanking, in spite of the gradually approaching political ruin. When the Sung armies finally in 975 laid siege to Nanking, the city fell and the "T'ang emperor" was taken prisoner without a single blow. He had in vain tried to avert the disaster by sending his minister to the Sung emperor with the message that he regarded the conqueror as a father. But to this Sung T'ai-tsü answered: "Sons do not separate from their fathers. Do you think that I shall allow another man to snore alongside my bed?"¹

Li Hou-chu, "the puppet emperor", was however treated leniently and was allowed to follow his personal whims as a wandering poet during the few last years of his life. Political ambitions had never been his main concern, he was far more interested in Buddhist philosophy, poetry and art. Himself an

accomplished man of letters, prominent as a poet, musician, calligraphist and painter, he surrounded himself with the best representatives of these various branches of aesthetic culture, instituting an Academy of Painting (*Hua-yüan*) and collections of calligraphy, which included the most famous specimens of Wang Hsi-chih's writings. His own sybaritism is said to have been spotless, "his clothes, his fame, his food, were all of a most exquisite quality. Even the paper that he wrote on, manufactured by a firm called 'The Hall of Untroubled Thought', was of such surpassing texture that the writers and painters of the eleventh century vied with one another in obtaining small strips of it."² And in this milieu of elegance, refinement and sensual enjoyment women no doubt held a central position, as may be observed in some of the best pictures of the time.

Practically all the painters of some merit who at this period were active in the south-eastern section of the country were drawn into the court circles at Nanking and became *tai chao*, or members of the *Hua-yüan*. Some of them were employed in decorating the emperor's summer palace, others painted in the Buddhist temples, but most of them painted just scrolls on which they recorded scenes from the life of the court ladies and their feminine occupations, or the still more fugitive beauty of flowers, insects and birds, motifs which from now on are accorded an important place in the repertoire of painters. It was a period of intense artistic activity, a kind of preparatory stage to the rich harvest of the Sung period. This may still be observed in a few very refined paintings which, though attributed to painters of the Five Dynasties, are stylistically so closely akin to pictures produced in the hey-day of Northern Sung art that one may feel some hesitation as to their actual date.

¹ Giles, *Biogr. Dict.*, 1236.

² Waley, *Introduction to the Study of Chinese Painting*, p. 165.

One of the finest examples of this premature Sung painting, if we so may call it, is the famous hand-scroll formerly in the Manchu Household collection and now on exhibition in the Hui-hua kuan in the Peking Palace, which illustrates the Night Revels of the Minister Han Hsi-tsai (*Han Hsi-tsai yeh-yen t'u*). The scroll has been identified by critics of Ming and later times with a picture by Ku Hung-chung, a competitor of Chou Wên-chü and *tai chao* in the time of the emperor Hsüan-tsung of the Southern T'ang state (943-60), but owing to its rather advanced stylistic perfection and technical refinements it has been classified by some modern critics as an early Sung copy after Ku Hung-chung's original. This classification may be the most cautious and scholarly, but it is hardly more convincing than the traditional attribution to a court painter of the Southern T'ang state. We are consequently describing it here under its traditional attribution and with the support of the literary records referring to the motif and to the circumstances connected with its execution¹ (Pls. 120, 121).

When Han Hsi-tsai served as vice-president of the government of the Southern T'ang state during the reign of Li Hou-chu, its last ruler, and realized that the independent existence of this state would soon be ended, he gave himself up to drinking and licentious pleasures in order to dispel his anxiety. He wasted his family fortune on female slaves, acquiring at least a hundred of them, and whenever he received some guests the girls had to entertain them. Some of these females flirted with the guests, others played or fought with them; they even went so far as to lay violent hands on tablets and seals of the guests. Han Hsi-tsai became so accustomed to this kind of revelling that he just walked out when he had had enough of it and left the others to go on at their pleasure. There were also some Taoist(?) doctors and Buddhist monks, skilled in drug-making, who, when they came to the house, went right into the private apartments and sat down with the girls.

When the rumours about the minister's rowdy entertainments reached the monarch, the latter was

greatly upset, "but in spite of his anger, he did not want to expose the minister publicly". Instead he ordered a *tai chao* of the Painting Academy to proceed to the minister's house at night in order to secretly observe what was going on – "the drinking and the playing and the reckless manners of the guests" – and then to give a faithful representation of the whole thing in a picture. When this was done – by Ku Hung-chung – and the picture was shown to Han Hsi-tsai, "the minister looked at it quietly" (and was not the least disturbed by it).

The finale of Han Hsi-tsai's life is described as follows in *Hou kuai-lu*: He wasted his family fortune on the female musicians and carried his night revels to the very limit. Finally his monthly salary gave out and was not sufficient for his daily life. He then donned the tattered garments and the worn sandals of a beggar and went around, carrying a *ch'in*, from house to house asking for food. Some of his former friends and servants then came out to help him. In spite of these hardships and the degradation that he suffered through the order of the emperor, he was posthumously given the title P'ing Chang Shih and the name Wên-ching.

The picture which became the lasting memorial of Han Hsi-tsai's romantic enjoyments and of the last facet, so to speak, of the "puppet" emperor Li Yü's somewhat effeminate aestheticism is also partly described in *Lung hsüeh chi*: "Han Hsi-tsai is seated at the head of the scroll together with his young friend and pupil Chu Hsien, the secretary Ts'an Chuang-yüan, and Li Chia-ming, who was the assistant director of the imperial musicians (*Chiao*

¹ The picture is mentioned in connexion with accounts of Han Hsi-tsai's career in *Wu-tai shih-p'u*, vol.V and *Lung hsüeh chi* by Tu Wu, and also (by title only) in *Hsüan-ho hua-p'u*, and described in *Shu-hua fang*, vol.V. According to *Chung-kuo jên-ming ta ts'ü-fien* Han Hsi-tsai served first as a tutor of the Crown Prince. When Li Hou-chu ascended the throne, he became the official recorder, and as such openly criticized the conditions at court. He rose gradually to the post of a prime minister. He spent his money recklessly on great numbers of concubines and amused himself later on by going around in a beggar's garment asking for food even at the homes of his former concubines. He wrote *Ke yen* (Maxims) and a Collection of Essays.

fang fu-shih), and his younger sister, who is playing the *hu-ch'in* "a large lute). In the next scene "Han himself is beating the drum and the dancing-girl Wang Wu-shan is performing the *Liu-yao* dance (while two assistants are beating the rhythm with their hands). Wang Wu-shan was a most graceful and intelligent girl much beloved by Han Hsi-tsai." These scenes are perfectly illustrated in the picture (Pls. 122, 123).

The subsequent scenes may be interpreted as somewhat extended illustrations to the following episodes mentioned in the text: "Whenever Han Hsi-tsai was drunk, he needed music; its noise made him sober again." . . . A young man speaks to two girls and orders them to go out of the house. "Their names are Ning-su and Su-chih" (Sweet Cheese and Plain Silk).

The picture shows the main part of a large curtained bed (where Han Hsi-tsai found some rest) and a woman with a large lute approaching in company with a girl who carries a tray with refreshments. The stimulating effect of the music is illustrated in the following scene where Han is shown in company with four graceful girls, who are chatting merrily with their legs tucked up, while the minister is washing his hands in a small basin brought in by a servant. In the next scene Han is seated cross-legged on a broad chair in deep *négligé*, wearing only a high cap and a loose shirt, speaking to a girl in front of him while another stands with lowered head behind the chair with a charming little apprentice at her side. The old man seems to be exhorting the women; is he sending them away? There is an air of sadness on their faces and in their postures . . .

The musical entertainment is in full swing again in the next scene, where five girls are blowing their pipes and flutes to their hearts' desire, bending and turning towards one another so as to keep in time with the rhythm indicated by the man with the wooden clapper. This section is separated from the final scene by a high wooden screen decorated with a landscape painting. Behind this stands a woman speaking to a man in front of the screen and

pointing in the opposite direction to the man sitting on a chair and speaking to two rather fuddled-looking girls, presumably "Sweet Cheese" and "Plain Silk", who are being told to leave the house. The final and perhaps most touching note is struck by the last group consisting of a youthful man who is trying to persuade a weeping girl to overcome her timidity and step into the circle of debauchery so attractively unrolled in the rest of the picture. It is the simplest and most human of these episodes from the Night Revels of Han Hsi-tsai.

The importance of this picture as a *document intime*, or a record of the evanescent pleasures of a decadent culture, is obvious and recognizable even in reproductions, but its artistic beauty can be realized only before the painting itself. It is so closely dependent on the refinement in the drawing and the delicate colouring with subdued, broken tones of pink, light blue, pale green, greyish, black and white pigments. The effect depends to no small extent on the colouring and, at closer sight, on the exquisite ornamentation of the ladies' garments and of the various pieces of furniture, utensils and instruments. Every detail contributes to the general impression of aesthetic refinement, unsurpassed sensitiveness and technical perfection.

The composition is in a way continuous, yet divided by means of high screens, draped beds and large rectangular sofas into four main portions illustrating successive acts in the entertainment. Each one of these is a separate spatial unit enclosed by screens, tables, chairs or benches, which are placed diagonally and sloping towards the beholder. These are all represented as seen from above; the beds, which are only partly shown between the curtains, lead right into the background, and the girl who in the first section is peeping in from behind a screen, seems to be in another room. Any attempt to formulate hard and fast rules for the spatial design in a picture like this would be futile, because it is a compromise resulting from the continuous shifting of the point of view and subservient to the desire for illustrative clearness and decorative balance.

Ku Hung-chung, who according to tradition painted this scroll, is not counted among the leading masters in Chinese art-history, yet he must have been an excellent representative of the intimate illustrative art which at this time developed into a species of its own. The information about the painter transmitted in the various chronicles is limited to the statements that he was born in Chiang-nan, was particularly skilled in figure-painting and served as a *tai chao* at the court in Nanking; and to these is added a more or less complete description of the picture representing Han Hsi-tsai's night-revels, which apparently formed the foundation of his fame. Besides there is a picture called Ming-huang Beating the Wu-t'ung-tree mentioned (in *Hsüan-ho hua-p'u*) and (in *P'ei-wên ch'ai*) another representing The Six Idlers, or the Six Carefree Philosophers, who are enjoying themselves far from the dust of conventional life. These pictures are lost without a trace while a third, representing a Cock-fight, is reproduced in *Chung-kuo ming-hua chi* and *Tsao* (p.18), but is clearly inferior in quality and not of pre-Sung date. It should, however, be remembered in this place because of its entertaining *genre* motif, which is represented with a touch of genuine country atmosphere.

Better known than Ku Hung-chung in Chinese art-history is Chou Wên-chü. His name is often met with on pictures representing graceful ladies and chubby children, which even when they are copies rather than originals prove his fame with posterity. He too served as a *tai chao* at the court in Nanking and was a favourite of Li Hou-chu, who employed him among other things for decorating his villa. It is said¹ of his brush-work that it was "firm and neat, vigorous and light like Li Hou-chu's manner of writing. He painted Taoist and Buddhist figures, carriages and costumes, high buildings and pavilions, mountains and forests in a manner of his own which was not below that of Wu Tao-tzû and Ts'ao P'u-hsing⁽¹⁾ In his paintings of gentlemen and ladies he followed Chou Fang, but surpassed him in elegance and refinement. In the Shêng-yüan period

(937-943) Li Hou-chou commissioned Chou Wên-chü to make a picture of a southern village (*Nan-chuang t'u*), and when it was finished he was greatly impressed by its refinement and wealth of detail."

According to T'ang Hou, the emperor also entrusted Chou Wên-chü with the same order as had been given to Ku Hung-chung, i.e. to represent the quasi-secret night revels of Han Hsi-tsai in a picture. But this picture seems to have been lost at an early date. T'ang Hou had seen only two copies of it; to which he adds: "But in the capital I have seen Ku Hung-chung's picture, which is a little different from that of Chou Wên-chü. It has a colophon by Shih Wei Wang Hao(?) and the seal of Shao Hsün. It is not a pure and fitting object for a high-class collection, but it may serve as a warning against licentious pleasures, and that is all."

When the writer in a later paragraph returns to Chou Wên-chü, he characterizes him in conjunction with other painters of noble ladies as follows: "The art of representing Palace ladies consists in grasping the deportments of the inner apartments. Chou Fang and Chang Hsüan of the T'ang period and Tu Hsiao and Chou Wên-chü of the Five Dynasties and Su Han-ch'ên of later times grasped the secret of this. It does not reside in applying rouge and face powder, nor in depicting gold ornaments and jade trinkets — mere decoration mistaken for art.

"I have seen a picture of a Palace lady by Chou Wên-chü. She has thrust her jade flute into her girdle and stands staring vacantly, her fingers clenched. Her feelings are held back; we know that she is filled with longing."²

One of Chou Wên-chü's favourite motifs was the musical performances by the Palace orchestra which was composed of young women. At least three versions of this motif are mentioned in *Hsüan-ho hua-p'u* and the general characteristics may still be observed in two (or several?) pictures which seem to be faithful copies after compositions by the master. The one which I saw twenty-five years ago in

¹ *Hsüan-ho hua-p'u*, vol. 7.

² *Hua chien*, pp. 7 and 8, edit. *Mei-shu ts'ung-shu*, III, A. 2.

C. T. Loo's gallery in Paris had a colophon by Shên Chou (dated 1507) and two poems by Li T'ai-po copied by Wu Jung-kuang (1773-1843). The main persons of the audience were the emperor Ming-huang and Yang Kuei-fei, who were placed on a dais while their suite of four ladies and two pages were standing close by.

The other version of the motif, formerly in the Wêng collection in New York and now in the Art Institute of Chicago, represents a similar musical entertainment staged in a park. The main person of the audience is a distinguished-looking gentleman with a long pointed beard and a high cap, who resembles Han Hsi-tsai (as he is represented in Ku Hung-chung's picture) so closely that one is tempted to conclude that the minister is also the principal personage in this picture. Yet it must be admitted that certain other figures make it more probable that the entertainment takes place in the garden of the imperial palace in Nanking, in which case the august person who is seated isolated on the dais would be the "puppet" emperor Li Yü (Hou-chu). The various ladies who make up the audience are evidently of a rather ceremonious kind; the most distinguished among them being the little person who sits on a low stool in front of the dais turned sideways; she wears a head-dress with gold ornaments worthy of a royal person. The other women are standing at a respectful distance from the man on the platform as if they were afraid of disturbing him in his meditative enjoyment of the music. At the opposite corner of the platform is a group formed by a large sacrificial vessel crowned by a dragon and a boy in fine garments accompanied by two women and a servant. He too must have some close connexion with the principal figure (Pls. 126-128).

In spite of the ceremonious formality prevailing in this audience, the members are all visibly impressed by the music, an enjoyment which is reflected in their attitudes and positions, as may be observed particularly in the thoughtful and collected countenance of the principal person, and the

beautifully relaxed lines of the little lady on the stool. The painter has succeeded in creating an atmosphere reverberating with soundless music. The wide space that opens between the audience and the orchestra, and which is made evident by a long ornamented carpet, contributes to this impression: the binding element of music seems to span the gap.

This is performed by an orchestra of eighteen young women, playing various string, wind and other instruments, such as p'i-p'as, harps, *ch'ins* and *hu-ch'ins*; pipes, bamboo-flutes, hand-drums and big drums, wooden clappers and the like. They are deeply absorbed in their respective instruments, as may be seen from their individual postures and expressions, and every detail down to the finest string is indicated with accuracy and refinement. Though the picture cannot be accepted as a work of the tenth century, it has retained enough of the original charm to serve as a substitute. The name of Chou Wên-chü and the title of the picture are written in the manner of the emperor Hui-tsung, which may be taken as an indication that it existed already in the North Sung period.

Less important as an illustration but perhaps closer to the master in execution is the short handscroll which I saw in the J. D. Chên collection in Hongkong, 1951, which is called *Resting from Embroidery Work*, a motif which Chou Wên-chü just like Chou Fang treated repeatedly. The composition is very simple and spacious, the main part of it is occupied by a large baldachin bed with transparent gauze draperies which balances the composition though not placed quite in the centre. At some distance from its foot two girls are seated on a carpet bending over their embroidery frame, while a servant is standing by the table further away and another servant accompanied by a little dog is approaching from the opposite end. A young woman is reclining in the bed, and there is also (on the bed) in front of her a long bamboo roller (for rolling up silk or the like?), and behind the bed is hung a long horizontal landscape painted on silk. The plants and the garden stones close to the bed

indicate that the scene is laid on an open terrace, but there is no further indication of the stage. The various pieces of furniture are represented as seen from above; they project slantingly out from the picture-plane and furthermore are represented from a consistently shifting point of view. The composition is thus a typical example of the manner prevailing in the tenth century, but whether the picture was actually executed at the time is difficult to ascertain since it has grown very dark¹ (Pl.129).

Here should also be mentioned the fan-shaped picture in the Boston Museum (formerly in the collection of Yüan Yüan (1764-1849), which represents a boy resting on a broad couch which stands on a terrace amidst blossoming rose-mallows. His attention is caught by a small dog on the ground and a white cat on the bench still hesitating before they start a fight. There are various pots with stones and growing plants on the ground beside the blossoming shrubs and high wooden balustrade in the background, and all these diverse decorative elements are most carefully elaborated so that to the eye they emerge even more prominently than the figure. In other words, the emphasis in the decorative details is rather disturbing for the harmonious impression of the picture as a whole; but it is as such (as well as by its motif) a perfect example of the art of the transition period when the closely defining quasi-realistic representational manner of T'ang artists had not as yet been transmuted into the self-evident ease and harmony of the Sung academicians. The traditional attribution to Chou Wên-chü seems to me acceptable at least as an indication of the school and period of this picture (Pl.130).

Few painters have reached greater popularity in their lifetime as well as with posterity than Chou Wên-chü; his pictures incarnated, so to speak, the taste of the period, his favourite subjects were of a kind that everybody could easily appreciate and they were treated with appealing grace. More than fifty pictures are listed under his name in *Hsüan-ho hua-p'ü* and some of these are known through later copies as well as through descriptions. The Palace

Concerts mentioned above are prominent examples of this class, but in addition to these may be remembered the long scroll representing Palace Ladies, also known through a monochrome ink copy, now divided into a number of sections belonging to various collections. The picture consists of a series of scenes from the women's quarters in the palace; the ladies are all occupied in adjusting the details of their *toilettes*, particularly the elaborate coiffures (with or without gold ornaments), some are painting their lips in front of large mirrors, others are washing their feet with the help of servants, while others again are taking care of the children or exercising their skill on string instruments, such as the *ch'in* and the *p'i-p'a*.² In spite of all these variations in the occupation of the women, the long composition appears somewhat monotonous, and this is emphasized by the absence of colour, the copy being executed in ink only with a rather thin and delicate brush. The figures are characterized by their graceful movements and postures rather than by any attempt to individualize the types (Pl.131). They are all somewhat indolent beauties of the Nanking court and they seem to feel no need of revealing their hidden humanity. We are told that in one of his pictures, which represented A Spring Evening in a T'ang Palace, the painter introduced no less than eighty figures besides a number of dogs, parrots and butterflies. The motifs or names of the pictures made as a matter of fact little difference to him, because the models were always the same, though represented in various situations such as Resting from Embroidery Work, Ironing Cloth, Washing Babies, A Spring Excursion, etc.

Wang Ch'i-han, who also served as a *tai chow* at the Nanking Court and was greatly appreciated by

¹ Another version of the same composition, likewise attributed to Chou Wên-chü, was shown to me in Japan in 1951, but it was inferior in quality and obviously later in date of execution.

² Various sections of this copy, in the collections of Sir Percival David, London, Mr. Berenson, Settignano, the Philadelphia Museum and the Fogg Museum, Cambridge, Mass., have been reproduced in *Bijutsu Kenkyū*, vol. XXV and LVI and discussed in articles by Yukio Yoshida.

the emperor Li Hou-chu, sometimes painted scenes similar to those of Chou Wên-chü, but the most important part of his work consisted of religious and mythological paintings. In the Hsüan-ho collection he was represented by no less than 170 pictures and of these more than seventy are enumerated in the catalogue. The majority of these represent such subjects as Stellar Divinities, Nature Spirits, Fairies and Immortals, others represent Buddhas and Lohans, of which he painted several series which became highly appreciated. But there are also landscapes by Wang Ch'i-han and a few *genre* paintings representing scholars and women with their books or their musical instruments. But hardly anything of this richly varied production has survived; no Buddhist or Taoist paintings by Wang Ch'i-han are known to us, and it seems doubtful whether any of the *genre* paintings attributed to him are his own work.

One of the most attractive is the fan painting in the Boston Museum, which represents an open pavilion on a garden terrace. A large willow, growing in the middle of the picture, divides the composition into two halves. One side is occupied by a company of six children (some with masks) playing on the terrace, while the other side offers a view into the pavilion, where a graceful little woman is tending a boy who is lying on his stomach on a bench. The lady and her maid are both genuine "willow beauties", very slender, almost immaterial, representing the new mode or type so very unlike that of Chou Fang's opulent ladies. The increasing importance of babies and children is a no less important sign of the new fashion; they had hardly any place in the art of the T'ang period (Pl. 133).

Another picture for which strong claims as an authentic work by Wang Ch'i-han have been put forth, is the so-called *K'an-shu t'u* (Examining Writings). It is a short handscroll once in the collection of Tuan Fang and then in the possession of John C. Ferguson; it is known to me only through the miserable reproduction in *Chung-kuo ming-hua chi* which is too blurred to serve for anything but a

general impression of the design. Nor can the dark copy in the Metropolitan Museum or the free and late version of the popular design, in the Freer Gallery, serve as substitutes for the famous original.

The picture is an intimate illustration of the life of a scholar. The old man is seated in his study at a small table in front of a large screen which is decorated with a landscape-painting. A kind of desk with books and scrolls stands in the middle of the room. The scholar is pausing for a moment from his studies and cleansing his ear with a tiny wooden stick, while a servant with some fresh tea is approaching from the side.

If we may trust the inscription in the manner of the emperor Hui-tsung and accept the statements of several old and modern authorities, the picture should be an original by Wang Ch'i-han. In fact, J. C. Ferguson wrote that "this scroll is probably the most complete and perfect specimen of early Chinese painting now in any collection".¹

Among the artists in Nanking who took an interest in the gentler side of life, painting women and children besides flowers, birds and butterflies, should also be remembered Ku Tê-ch'ien, a great favourite of the emperor Li Hou-chu, who used to say: "Of old there was Ku K'ai-chih, and now we have Ku Tê-ch'ien". His name is attached to a pair of large paintings of lotus flowers which, even though not of the period, represent the stylistic tradition of the Hsü Hsi school, as will be shown in a following chapter.

* * *

Nanking was no doubt the main centre of secular figure-painting during this epoch, owing to the interest of the court in this kind of art; but there were also at other places, as for instance in Shu, prominent figure-painters who treated secular subjects as well as the more traditional religious motifs. Some of these were discussed in a preceding chapter, but we may here add a few words about a painter of entirely different origin because his name

¹ *Chinese Painting*, pp. 81, 82.

is traditionally attached to an interesting picture in the Boston Museum. His name was Hu Kuei and he came from the so-called Hou Kitan tribe. He is classified in *Hsüan-ho hua-p'u* as the most important painter of Tartarian people and horses, and very highly praised by Liu Tao-ch'un and later critics.¹ No less than sixty-five of his pictures were preserved in the imperial collection, most of them representing horsemen, hunters, Mongolian camps, and the life on the great plains beyond the northern border of the Middle Kingdom. The descriptive notice about his art in the above-mentioned catalogue contains some interesting remarks worth quoting:

"Hu Kuei from Han-yang painted barbarian horses. His compositions were ingenious and intimate; they seemed sometimes over-crowded or confused, but the brush-work was clear and strong. His camp scenes with all the appropriate paraphernalia, his pictures of shooting and hunting tribesmen, were delicate and minute, representing every detail with perfect clearness. His camels and horses were more broadly painted with a brush made of wolf's hair, so as to give them more life. He interpreted all these things very skilfully, as may be seen from such pictures of his as *The Seven Riders Coming down from the Yin Mountain*, *Eagle-hunters*, *Horse-stealers*, and others. His style of painting was continued by his son Hu Ch'ien.

"Mei Yao-ch'ên² wrote a colophon on Hu Kuei's picture of *Barbarians Dismounting from their Horses*, which said in substance 'Among the woollen tents surrounded by screen walls the cauldrons are boiling, the drums and horns are silent and do not scare the wild geese of the vast plains' . . . From Mei Yao-ch'ên's words may be realized that Hu Kuei certainly was no vulgar man."

Hu Kuei is often coupled by Chinese historians with Tung Tan, a son of the Liao sovereign, who as a painter became known under the name Li Tsang-hua, which was given him when he in 931 left his northern home and presented his allegiance to the Chinese emperor. The artistic activity of these two

Kitan or Liao painters was evidently developed and guided by their close contact with contemporary Chinese painting, yet they specialized in depicting motifs from their home country and became famous for their excellent pictures of horses and huntsmen, camel-drivers and Tartar soldiers. They were both, according to Liu Tao-ch'un, painters of the highest class, remarkable for naturalistic exactness and technical perfection, though with some individual differences, because Hu Kuei "caught the flesh" of the horses, while Tsan-hua "caught their bony structure".³

These differences are not, however, very marked in the large album leaves by which these painters are represented in the Ku-kung collection; they are all works of great refinement. This is true of Hu Kuei's picture of *Three Hunters on Horseback* with large Afghan hounds as well as of Li Tsang-hua's representations of Tartar soldiers and of the Liao king riding on a briskly galloping steed. The latter may be more dramatically expressive but they are all masterly from a technical viewpoint, firmly drawn and delicately coloured.

The same may also be said of the fan-shaped picture in Boston, ascribed to Hu Kuei, though it is not so well preserved; it is executed with utmost exactness in every detail, such as the horse's trappings and the outfit of the hunter, yet possessing a certain grandeur of design depending on the placing of the man with the horse at the very edge of the picture, while the rest of it is simply an open drab-coloured plain reaching up to a high horizon and suggesting the limitless expanse of the Mongolian hunting-grounds (Pl. 135).

¹ In *Wu-tai ming-hua p'u* I, and also in *Shu-hua p'u*, vol. 49.

² Mei Yao-ch'ên (1002-1060) was a distinguished scholar and poet of the Sung dynasty, a close friend of Ou-yang Hsiu. Cf. Giles, *Biogr. Dict.*, 1511. His colophons on Hu Kuei's paintings indicate that the painter lived into the Sung period.

³ The characterizations of the two masters are much the same in *Wu-tai ming-hua p'u* I and *T'u-hua chien-wen chih* (cf. Sooper's translation, pp. 25, 26 and 163).

Bird, Flower and Animal-painting

Huang Ch'üan, Hsü Hsi and Chao Ch'ang

A SPECIAL branch of painting much favoured in the Ch'êng-tu school was the representation of flowers, birds, insects, and the like, i.e. the most delicate manifestations of the life of nature, hitherto seldom represented as independent motifs. In this field, as in so many other directions, the painters of the Five Dynasties period were not only the precursors but the competitors of the Sung artists, and it was principally from Ch'êng-tu that this kind of painting was transplanted to the Sung court.

The foremost of the flower and bird-painters in Shu and one of the most influential masters that ever worked in this field was Huang Ch'üan, *zai* Yao-shu. He was a native of Ch'êng-tu, born at the very beginning of the tenth century and active until 965 as a highly honoured painter and official in the capital of the Later Shu kingdom. The earliest account of his life and artistic activity is probably the one in *I-chou ming-hua lu*, from the end of the tenth century, but this is further expanded and completed with some anecdotes in *Hsüan-ho hua-p'u*. The essential information from these two sources may be summarized as follows:

Huang Ch'üan acquired already in early years an extraordinary skill in painting. "When Tiao Kuang-yin came to Shu he taught Huang how to paint bamboos, rocks, flowers and birds. Then he learned from Sun Wei how to paint dragons and water, rocks, pines and monochrome bamboos, and from Li Shêng the painting of landscapes, bamboos and trees; and in all these special branches he grasped the wonderful points." As he had followed masters

like Sun Wei and Li Shêng, he knew how to surpass the style of Tiao Kuang-yin.

In the first year of the Tung-kuang era (923), i.e. the reign of Chuang-tsung of the Later T'ang dynasty, when the Shu empire was re-established, Huang Ch'üan was made a *tai chao* in the Academy and received "the fish-shaped seal-case of red gold". The ruler often summoned Huang Ch'üan to the palace, and once he asked the painter to improve a hand in Wu Tao-zü's painting of Chung Kuei. But instead of touching Wu's painting, Huang made an entirely new picture, and when asked why he did so, he said: "In Wu's picture the attention of the eye depends on the use of the second finger, but in my picture it all depends on the use of the thumb".

His skill in painting birds is illustrated by two stories, the one regarding a picture of cranes, the other a picture of pheasants. The cranes had been sent as a gift to the ruler of Shu by the governor of Hai-nan (938). They were considered most marvellous, Huang Ch'üan depicted them in many vivid postures: "startled by the dew, picking the moss, cleaning their feathers, adjusting their wings, crying to the sky and lifting their feet; with their exquisite colours their appearance even surpassed nature". The room of this picture became known as the Hall of the Six Cranes, *Liu-ho tien*, and many prominent people came with presents to Huang Ch'üan in order to obtain pictures of cranes from him.

Later on (in 953) for another hall in the palace, called *Pa-kua tien*, he executed a picture of wild pheasants, which were no less wonderful than the

cranes. When some envoys from a foreign land came to the court with the present of an eagle, this bird tried several times to seize the pheasants by the neck. The ruler, Mêng Ch'ang, was greatly surprised, and the fame of the painter was also sung in a poem in which it was said that Huang Ch'üan grasped the very life of birds and did not simply imitate earlier bird-painters.

His manner of painting is furthermore characterized in *Hsüan-ho hua-p'u* as follows: "He threw off all the traditional rules and greatly surpassed his various teachers. It is generally said that in Tu Fu's poems and Han Yü's essays every character has a definite source; in the same sense it may be said that Ch'üan combined the most wonderful parts of various styles. There was no man of old, nor anyone of later times, equal to him. He painted all the mountain flowers (of Shu), the wild herbs, the rare birds, the strange animals, the river banks and the rocky islands, fishing boats and old rafts on the water, and he did it all with utmost refinement."

The gist of Huang Ch'üan's innovations as a bird and flower-painter seems to have been connected with his dispensing with the usual manner of doing the picture on a design made with brush and ink; this was reduced to a minimum, the colours were applied directly with a light brush, in thin layers or washes, so that no marked contours were visible; a manner of painting which became known as *mo-ku hua*, i.e. painting with "sunken" or "dead" (invisible) lines.

This new technical method seems to have been one of the main reasons why a kind of *jalousie de métier* developed between Huang Ch'üan and the great contemporary flower-painter from the South, Hsü Hsi, as reported by several of the Sung chroniclers and most clearly perhaps by Shên Kua (1030-1095) in *Mêng-ch'i pi-t'an*. He wrote:

"At the beginning of the present dynasty there was a man in Chiang-nan by the name of Hsü Hsi, and in the so-called empire of Shu there was the Han-lin *tai chao* Huang Ch'üan. Both were famous artists and particularly good in painting flowers and

bamboo. After the pacification of Shu, Huang Ch'üan, together with his sons Chü-ts'ai and Chü-pao and his younger brother Wei-liang, became officials of the Han-lin t'u-hua yüan; and as such they were very famous at the time. Later on, when Chiang-nan was pacified, Hsü Hsi came to the capital and sent in some pictures to the Academy of Painting for examination.

"As to their styles of painting (it may be said): the wonderful point in Huang's way of painting flowers was the application of colours. He worked with extraordinary refinement; the traces of ink were hardly visible, and he used simply thin washes of colour. This he called, 'to paint things alive' (or, 'to paint from life').

"Hsü Hsi painted with brush and ink very freely (as in grass-writing), indicating the general outlines with red colour, but the spirit of the life-breath reached very far, and there was an effect of living movement. Huang Ch'üan, who profoundly disliked the idea of being surpassed, expressed the opinion (of Hsü Hsi's pictures) that they were coarse and bad, not fitted for the Academy.

"But Hsi's son began to imitate the style of Huang. He did not use any brush and ink, but painted directly with colours, and called this manner *mo-ku hua*. He became very skilful in it, not inferior to the Huangs. Ch'üan and his son could find no flaw in his work, and received him into the Academy. But the *ch'i yüan* (resonance of the life-breath) was not on a level with that of Hsü Hsi's pictures."

The above characterization may serve to throw some light on Huang Ch'üan's social standing and manner of painting. He was apparently one of the most successful and dominating personalities in the artistic circles at the very beginning of the Sung period (and just before), and as his influence was transmitted by his son, it became predominant in the Sung Academy. Critics and later representatives of this academic tradition insist particularly on the master's manner of painting with "dead" or invisible lines (*mo ku*), i.e. a technical refinement

which was developed to final perfection in the emperor Hui-tsung's Academy. It was a kind of painting that corresponded to the aesthetic requirements in official quarters, but apparently did not satisfy the independent critics and "gentleman-painters" to the same extent. To them Hsü Hsi, the contemporary flower-painter in Nanking, was a greater genius as painter. The most succinct expression of this estimate is given by Mi Fei in the following entry in *Hua Shih*: "Huang Ch'üan's paintings are not worth collecting. It is easy to copy Huang's works, whereas Hsü Hsi's pictures cannot be copied." Yet he admits that there are exceptions: "Among Huang Ch'üan's works only the lotus-paintings are extraordinary, but though they are rich and luxuriant they are vulgar". Su Shih in a colophon criticized Huang Ch'üan's way of painting flying birds with necks and feet stretched out at the same time, which he said was not true to nature. (*Tung-p'o ch'üan-chi*, vol. 70.)

It should, however, also be remembered that according to other critics of the time, Huang Ch'üan was not exclusively a highly skilled and painstaking master of the *mo ku* manner, but also a very competent painter of ink-bamboos and the like. This is most eloquently expressed by a man called Li Tsung-o, whose words are quoted in *Shêng-ch'ao ming-hua p'ing* (Part III). When he saw a picture by the master representing some ink-bamboos he was so deeply impressed by its extraordinary quality that he wrote a short commentary on the respective merits of painting bamboos in colour or in ink as an introduction to two poems in praise of Huang Ch'üan's picture. He pointed out that the painters representing flowers and bamboos in colour were using their colours so as to make every stamen and every leaf perfect. "Huang Ch'üan from Shu did not do in that way. He painted the bamboos simply with ink, thus expressing their nature of solitary stillness and did not paint them with variegated colours, which is superficial and vulgar. Their graceful forms and slender joints as well as the rustic beauty of the autumn tints are all on the white silk.

They shiver like real bamboos, and one cannot tell whether the ink is the sage(?) or the bamboos (alive as) spirits. What a pity that Huang left this world long ago and no later man has carried on this tradition! Twenty years have passed since the kingdom of Shu was finished and Su I-chien got hold of these two paintings by Huang Ch'üan."

The writer then goes on to quote the two poems in which the artist is praised in similar terms as in the introduction, to wit: "Truly, Master Huang was most famous for his ink-bamboos! He transmitted the bamboo-idea and caught the bamboo-feeling in a few strokes of the brush without using any colour, and evoked the atmosphere of autumn with all its ruggedness . . ."

To judge by this characterization, which was based on a close observation of some pictures by the master, he might indeed be hailed as a forerunner of the masters of bamboo, such as Wên T'ung and Su Shih, just as well as the protagonist of *mo-ku hua*. The reason why he, after all, exercised a greater influence in the latter capacity and never earned a place in the class of the gentleman-painters was apparently that he was neither poet nor philosopher but more of a professional painter, though of high social class, and that his coloured paintings enjoyed the greatest popularity. According to Kuo Jo-hsü, it was "commonly said that Master Huang was a wealthy and distinguished person, while Hsü Hsi was unrestrained in his bohemianism. Each in his own way expressed his particular inclinations and with his brush mastered things seen or heard which were reflected in his heart": a characterization which, translated into modern language, meant that Hsü Hsi was the stronger artistic temperament, while Huang Ch'üan was the more restrained and successful personality, whose sensitiveness was often second to his intellectual curiosity, which found expression in study of nature and search for new technical methods. Liu Tao-ch'un, the author of *Shêng-ch'ao ming-hua p'ing*, had no doubt good reason for the remark that he added to the above quotation from Li Tsung-o's discourse on bamboo-painting,

i.e. "Huang Ch'üan was a past master in the use of colours. His brush-work was most wonderful. He was the most skilful scholar from the Western regions."

A closer study of Huang Ch'üan's style as a painter of flowers, bamboo and birds, seems no longer practicable, because the pictures nowadays honoured with his name are of a rather disparate character and most of them may be said to inspire more doubt than conviction as specimens of Huang Ch'üan's art. The only exception to this rule, to my knowledge, is a large album-leaf, mounted as a short handscroll which formed part of the exhibition in the Hui-hua kuan of the Peking Palace in 1954. Strictly speaking, it should not be described as a complete picture, but rather as a study sheet, because the small birds, butterflies and insects represented here with colours in a kind of *mo ku* manner are not combined or arranged into a unified design. Each one of these winged beings is a small picture by itself, more remarkable for fidelity to nature than for any attempt at pictorial transmutation. The uncommon historical interest of the sheet depends on the inscription by the master, according to which he presented these studies to his son Ch'ü-pao; probably with the idea of encouraging him in his observations of life in nature (Pl.134).

The master who did these very delicate studies of insects and birds could hardly have done the picture, in the form of an album-leaf or short scroll, in the Palace Museum collection which represents A River View in Winter, though it is signed with Huang Ch'üan's name.¹ It is a rather attractive picture with a definite atmosphere produced by the light snow on the bare willow and the bamboos between the stones, the ducks on the grey water and the hunched up magpies in the tree, but it is painted (with ink and colours) in a relatively free manner with long brush-strokes and light washes. The technical execution bespeaks the Yüan or early Ming period, which does not preclude the possibility of a directing influence from Huang Ch'üan; he may well have done pictures of this kind with bare trees and bamboos

which caused the following remark by T'ang Hôu: "His withered trees are freely sketched with a light brush; he painted bamboos which were like broken nails and cut-off iron wire".²

Most important among the more pretentious paintings ascribed to Huang Ch'üan, is the famous handscroll representing Birds Gathering at a Willow Pool, formerly in the Manchu Household collection now in the Ada S. Small collection at Yale University. It has an inscription referring to the recording and selecting of the painting by the Interior Treasury of Painting in 1032, and the seals of the emperors Hui-tsung and Chang-tsung of the Chin dynasty besides later ones. According to these documentary records, the picture should be classified as a work of the North Sung period, or possibly earlier, a date also indicated by the general design and the drawing of the birds and plants. But it must have passed through some transformation, caused perhaps by an attempt to restore the rather thick and substantial pigments and the darkening of the silk which blurs the impression of the original and inspires doubts as to the age of the picture. A thorough technical investigation would perhaps throw more light on this problem. In the meantime we must limit ourselves to a few remarks about the composition.

It is a kind of panorama of bird-life among blossoming trees and shrubs. The first section consists of some tufts of bamboo and a spreading prunus(?) in which magpies and smaller birds are gathering. After this follow groups of hens and chicks between rose-mallows. The third section contains some pheasants on garden rocks and a prunus-tree in blossom with flocking magpies. Then follows a bushy willow with some white birds at the water edge and finally a stretch of placid water on which two large white swans and multicoloured Mandarin ducks are pursuing their peaceful search for food. A note of quiet evening mood vibrates as a faint echo through this last section (Pl.136).

¹ Cf. K.K. *Shu-hua chi*, vol.XL. It forms part of an album called *Ming-hui chi chün ts'ü*.

² *Hua Chien*.

The composition may be said to consist of a succession of bird and flower-pictures rather than of a unified design. The various groups of trees, plants, rocks and birds have only slight formal connexion, but taken separately they are interesting as close studies of flowers and bird-life. The main birds are practically all shown in full side-view and the leafage of the blossoming tree and shrubs is spread out for show. These somewhat formal arrangements as well as the large hiatuses between the groups or sections are characteristic marks of an early design, observable in other scroll compositions ascribed to the pre-Sung period, but to what extent they are characteristic of Huang Ch'üan individually escapes my experience.

* * *

Hsü Hsi, the unconquered competitor of Huang Ch'üan for the supremacy in the field of flower and bird-painting, may have been a few years younger, but his biographical data are less well known, because he never held any prominent official position. Yet his paintings were highly appreciated by the art-loving monarch Li Hou-chu in Nanking, the place from where he came. The best characterization of his artistic activity is given in *Shêng-ch'ao ming-hua p'ing*, Part III, from which the following may be quoted:

"Hsi was a good painter of flowers, bamboo (forests), trees, cicadas and butterflies, and all sorts of herbs and insects. He often dallied in the flower and vegetable gardens looking for motifs. He even introduced simple vegetables and sprouts of grain in his paintings. In painting in the *hsieh-i* manner he surpassed the ancients and reached the wonderful in his own way. He was also able to increase the impression of life by the application of colours.

"Li Yü (the 'emperor' Li Hou-chu) had brought together a great quantity of his paintings in the Chi-ying hall, and when Hsi died in his home and Li Yü gave up his mandate (to the Sung emperor), all these paintings were transferred to the imperial collection.

"When T'ai-tsung once was looking at some paintings and calligraphies he observed a picture by Hsü Hsi representing a pomegranate tree with more than a hundred fruit; it held his attention for a long while and then he said: 'I think that for representing the marvels of flowers and fruits there is only Hsi; the others are not worth looking at!' He showed this picture to his official painters; it became thus a model and a standard, because the emperor admired it so much."

After the above report on the traditions and anecdotes regarding Hsü Hsi's artistic accomplishments, the author, Liu Tao-ch'un, adds the following personal observations on his art:

"In discussing paintings of flowers and fruits, scholars and officials usually express the opinion that Huang Ch'üan's and Chao Ch'ang's pictures should be considered the best models, because their ways of painting things from life and of using colour go far beyond the thoughts of common men. But if they are compared with Hsü Hsi's works, we realize their inferiority. Ch'üan's paintings have spiritual quality (*shên*), but not the mysteriously wonderful (*miao*); Ch'ang's works are wonderful, but have not spiritual quality; Hsi alone combined the spiritual and the wonderful qualities.

"Those who are working in a refined manner blend their colours simply to obtain formal likeness; how could they give life-breath and structure? That was not the way of Hsi. He first fixed the branches, leaves, stamens, petals and flowers with ink and then applied the colours. Thus the life-breath and the design were first indicated, and the picture seemed exuberantly vigorous, almost like the works of the Creator. He was rightly regarded as the greatest painter of the whole country. Therefore he is placed in the divine spiritual class."

This enthusiastic estimate of Hsü Hsi's genius is re-echoed by Kuo Jo-hsü and Tung Yu. The former devoted a special short chapter in *T'u-hua chien-wên chih* to "The Difference in the Styles of Huang Ch'üan and Hsü Hsi", in which he characterizes the latter as follows:

"Hsü Hsi was a retired scholar from Chiang-nan, and his aspirations were lofty. He was unrestrained and free from all trammels of environment or the like. He often depicted flowers growing on the banks of rivers and lakes, wild bamboos, water-birds, and fishes in deep water. There are still to be seen pictures of his representing ducks, geese, egrets, rushes and reeds, shrimps and fish, clusters of broken branches, garden vegetables and herbs of many kinds. His 'feathers and furs' were all of very light and graceful shapes, and the sky and the water had one tone.

"The two masters (Huang Ch'üan and Hsü Hsi) were like the orchid of spring and the chrysanthemum of autumn. Each of them enjoyed great fame, and both created things of great value with their brush."

It is a matter of exceptional regret that the appreciation of a master like Hsü Hsi no longer can be based on a study of actual specimens of his brush. No authentic works of his have, to our knowledge, been preserved, nor can we be sure that any of the later pictures traditionally ascribed to him are faithful renderings of lost originals by the master. In other words, it is difficult in pictures which nowadays pass under his name to detect the extraordinary qualities that the critics of the Sung time extolled in the works of Hsü Hsi and on which his great fame is based. It may, however, be of interest here to recall a few of these attributed paintings, because some of them are of considerable artistic importance even though only remotely connected with the master's art.

This applies in particular to the large compositions of flowers and birds in Japanese collections, which have become famous through their outstanding decorative qualities, but whose connexion with the art of the Five Dynasties is – to say the least – very remote. Their traditional attribution to Hsü Hsi rests on rather shaky foundations; in the case of the two large paintings of lotus-flowers and birds, in Chion-in, Kyōto, the attribution may have been caused by the misinterpretation of a seal, but in other instances it was simply a result of the habit to

use the master's name for all flower and bird-paintings of outstanding beauty. We shall have occasion to discuss some of these pictures in connexion with related works of later periods. The large lotus-paintings are characteristic representatives of flower-painting in the South Sung period, while the elegant representations of a white heron standing on a snow-covered trunk, which exist in two variants,¹ probably were not executed before the Yüan period.

An entirely different style of flower-painting is represented by the picture in the Ku-kung collection called *Yü-t'ang fu-kuei* which is provided with the signature of Hsü Hsi and some early seals.² It represents a rich display of blossoming mu-tan, magnolias and a small tree in combination with small birds, a garden rock and a large Mandarin duck at the foot of the rock. As far as can be seen in a poor reproduction, all these elements are carefully rendered with a perfect grasp of their respective characteristics. But the composition is compact; the tall and narrow picture is completely filled with the flowers and birds, which detach themselves in variegated colours against a blue background. The decorative effect is more like that of a tapestry than of a painting. It reminds us of the colourful composition representing Flowers of New Year's Day (*Sui-ch'ao t'u*) ascribed to Chao Ch'ang (likewise in the former Palace collection and shown at the London Exhibition, 1936),³ even though the present picture has more distinction in the characterization of the flowers. Not knowing the original, I am unable to express an opinion as to the actual age of the picture, but the design as such may well be by Hsü Hsi. He is reputed to have been the originator of such gorgeous peony paintings (PL.138).

Hsü Hsi's name has also been attached to handscrolls representing birds in landscapes. One picture

¹ Cf. *Shimbi*, vol. XV and *Sōgen Meigashū*, Pl. 55.

² K.-k. *Shu-hua chi*, vol. XLV. Painted with colours on silk. Size, 3' 3" × 1' 1". The title *Yü-t'ang fu-kuei* (Jade Hall Peony) may be interpreted as a formula of good wishes for wealth and happiness.

³ Reproduced in K.-k. *Shu-hua chi*, vol. XXI.

of this type with some quails among shrubs is mentioned in the Catalogue of the former National Museum in Peking; it is said to be signed and provided with inscriptions of the Sung, Yüan and Ming periods, but I have never seen it. Another handscroll, representing A Hundred White Birds (Egrets and Herons), was in the Ti P'ing-tzū collection in Shanghai. The somewhat blurred reproduction in *Chung-kuo ming-hua chi* (Pl. XIV) conveys the impression of an attractive composition such as might have been conceived in the South Sung or Yüan period but hardly at an earlier date. The plants as well as the birds are gracefully rendered with a fine brush in a style derived from the South Sung academicians.

Hsü Hsi's manner of painting flowers became in later times known as the *lo mo* (dropping ink) method, probably because it was based on a free flow of ink in the primary design or outlines of the picture.¹ The first stage in the creative work of the painter seems to have been a light ink sketch; after this followed the applications of washes of ink or colours. We are told, for instance by T'ang Hou, that "Hsü Hsi's paintings of herbs and trees, insects and fishes were as natural as if made by the Creator. His ink flowed freely from a full brush, but within the flowers he used some touches of red colour which gave them a gust of life." In other words, his flower-painting had an expressionistic quality that could not be equalled by any other master in the same field. This is expressed by various critics of the Sung and later times, most beautifully perhaps in the following colophon by Tung Yu, on a picture by the master, representing Mu-tan flowers:²

"The critics say: the wonderful thing in painting is to give birth to (express) the idea without loss of (objective) reality. When that is done, the artist's skill is perfect. It is asked, how should the meaning (idea) be expressed? The answer is simply: by what is called *tzü jen* (naturalness). If it is asked: what is naturalness? The answer is: not to diverge from what is real. Thus it is obtained.

"See how things are produced by Heaven and Earth. There is only one life-breath moving and transforming everything. It influences and moves things in a mysterious way and makes them fitting. Nobody knows who produces it, because it is accomplished naturally. The painters of today believe that they are wonderful, but in making their shapes and spreading their colours, they aim simply at the outward likeness (appearance) of things. They do it all according to a method, but in an inverted way, based on human exertions (by conscious exertion of skill). How could that be in harmony with the activity of Nature?

"Hsü Hsi's way of painting flowers was different from that of ordinary artists. Those who say that he was careless in regard to essentials and missed reality, are mistaken. When, for instance, he painted some leaves from the front and others from the back, and flowers drooping and rising, reacting to the generative forces of Heaven and Earth, the exuberant splendour of the flowers is absolutely unrestrained, it is luminous and sparkling, so that people are dazzled by it. This is possible only when the idea has been brought out (given birth).

"Chao Ch'ang's flowers are wonderful owing to their colours, but compared with Hsü Hsi's paintings they have no vital principle; they are simply like screens embroidered by women."

Tung Yu's description of flower-painting and of Hsü Hsi's work in particular, is probably the closest approach to the essentials in this art that has been expressed by any of the old critics.

It throws some light on the Chinese attitude towards this kind of art, which remained much the same all through the ages, from the time of the Five Dynasties down to the Ch'ien-lung era. As long as there were great creative flower-painters in China, their aim was "*shêng i*", i.e. to give birth to, or to reveal the idea, the inherent meaning or life of the

¹ Cf. Tanaka Toyozō's article: "Lo Mo Flower-painting of the South T'ang period", in *Tōyō Bijutsu Tanō* (in Japanese).

² *Kuang-ch'uan hua-po*, II, p. 53.

flowers. This could not be accomplished simply by technical skill and adherence to formal characteristics, it had to be done "*tsü jan*", i.e. as spontaneously as the processes of Nature.

The keys to the argument are the two expressions – *shêng i* and *tsü jan*; if the artist is able to grasp and apply their meaning in his work, he will, so to speak, harmonize his life-breath with that of Nature and express through his brush something that endows the form with life and character, though it is invisible to ordinary men.

The pictures which Hsü Hsi, according to the biographers, once sent in to the Imperial Academy were refused, and none of the early academicians seems to have taken much account of him, not even his grandson, the well-known painter Hsü Ch'ung-sü, who adopted the manner of the Huang family. But that did not prevent the leading critics of the eleventh and early twelfth centuries (and later) from hailing Hsü Hsi as the greatest master in the field. His influence was not of an immediate kind, nor was it confined to flower and bird-painting. It may rather be characterized as a broad undercurrent in the development of the so-called *hsieh i*, or idea-writing, the special kind of expressionistic brushwork which was cultivated by the gentleman-painters of the Sung period and their successors, particularly among the bamboo-painters, in the Yüan and Ming periods. The statement that Hsü Hsi added some light washes of colour instead of ink-washes to his ink-designs does not alter the fundamental fact that their life-breath and artistic significance were a matter of the brush-strokes.

* * *

Chao Ch'ang, whose flower-paintings, according to Tung Yu's statement, were like embroidered screens in comparison with Hsü Hsi's free and life-like pictures, was somewhat younger, but he is usually coupled with Huang Ch'üan and Hsü Hsi. From an historical point of view he may be said to have formed the keystone to the arched gateway leading into the field of later flower-painting, the

pillars of which were represented by the two great masters mentioned above.

According to the records in *Shêng-ch'ao ming-hua p'ing* (Part III) he came from Chien-nan (near Ch'êng-tu). "He was a man of proud and independent nature always unwilling to submit to coercion. He often travelled in Pa, Shu and Tzū (parts of Szechuan) and was a good painter of flowers and fruits. At first he followed the manner of T'êng Ch'ang-yu, but surpassed this master later on."¹

"The governors and provincial officials vied with each other to obtain some specimens of Chao Ch'ang's painting, but he did not want to part with them; consequently they were regarded as very precious things. In the Ta-chung Hsiang-fu era (1008-1017), Ting Chu-yai, who had heard about the painter, brought him a birthday present of 500 ounces of silver. Chao Ch'ang was alarmed and said: 'This man of wealth comes to me with a present; does he not want something from me?' Whereupon he went personally to Chu-yai and refused the gift. But when this wealthy man invited him to his Eastern Pavilion and asked him to paint some fresh vegetables, ripe melons and trees with fruits, Chao Ch'ang did this immediately and rendered their likeness completely."

Later on he went to Pien-liang, the Sung capital, where he was received with honours, but in his old age he returned to Shu and "spent much money in an effort to buy back his old paintings, so much was he 'hidden in himself'" (i.e. self-centred).

The motifs of his pictures were, however, not chosen from among the wild flowers of the Szechuan mountains, but mostly from the gardens. "Every morning before the dew was gone Chao Ch'ang used to make a tour of the garden, examining and enjoying combinations of variously coloured flowers, which he took in his hand and then painted. He called this to 'draw from life', and the people said that Ch'ang's paintings were dyed and not produced with colours laid on. If, in examining his

¹ T'êng Ch'ang-yu was a prominent painter of flowers and bamboo, active in the time of the former Shu dynasty (907-920).

pictures, one touched them with the hand, one did not feel the colours; so delicate were they."¹

The pictures which with more or less reason are ascribed to Chao Ch'ang may be classified in two main groups, the one comprising flower-paintings of small size, mostly in the shape of fans or album-leaves, the other consisting of larger pictures representing birds or more important compositions of trees, shrubs and flowers. The former are most common in Japanese collections, while the latter are better represented in the ex-imperial collection in China. Among the very best examples of the former class may be mentioned the two exquisite fan-shaped pictures in the collections of Marquis Asano and Mr. Sugahara (formerly Akaboshi), representing A Branch of a Flowering Wild-apple and A Branch of White Jasmine. These pictures are evidently based on very close observation of Nature and in that respect akin to certain flower studies by Leonardo da Vinci or Albrecht Dürer, but their charm is more transparent, their fragrance more vibrant than in the drawings or paintings by the great masters of the Renaissance (Pls. 139, 140).

The other class is represented by such compositions as Flowers on New Year's day, Magpies in a Blossoming Tree, and Tree-peonies, Epidendrum and Fungus, three pictures in the Palace Museum collection. The first (which was mentioned above) is a colourful composition with a mass of flowers arranged around a garden rockery; the white plum-blossoms, the red camellias, the fragrant narcissi and the opulent rose-mallows which detach themselves vividly from a soft background of green leaves and stalks. The picture was probably meant to transmit good wishes on New Year's day through the symbols of the decorative flowers. Its relatively formal style may be said to fit the date and thus to lend some support to the traditional attribution expressed in a colophon at the top of the picture (Pl. 141).

The two other large pictures in the same collection which are ascribed to Chao Ch'ang, seem to be executed at a later date. One represents Four Magpies in a Blossoming Tree (*K.-k. shu-hua chi*,

vol. XX), the other: Peonies, Epidendrums and Fungi by a Rockery (*K.-k. shu-hua chi*, vol. XXV). The compositions are of the kind that became popular in the Yüan and early Ming period, and I see no reason why the execution would not be of the same time. Their connexion with Chao Ch'ang cannot be very close.

A more likely design by the master is the album-leaf in the Manchu Household Collection (*Ch'ing Kung Ts'ang*, p. 34) which represents A Pair of Geese on a Shore in combination with polygonum plants, a simple and well-balanced composition that may be by the master (as indicated in the signature) even though the execution is later. The same may be said of the large picture in the British Museum, of Two Resting Geese. The birds are modelled and silhouetted into an almost sculpturesque group which has the imprint of a master like Chao Ch'ang (indicated in the signature), but they appear against a dark background without the least gleam of light or variation of tone which makes us inclined to see in the picture an early copy rather than an original of the tenth century.

Chao Ch'ang was evidently not a genius of the same class as Huang Ch'üan or Hsü Hsi, but owing to his intimate knowledge of nature and his technical proficiency, he became an important link in the development of flower and bird-painting and exercised considerable influence on the following generation and even later, as may be observed in the works of some of the academicians of the Hui Tsiung epoch. This was also admitted by T'ang Hou, in his otherwise rather cold estimate of Chao Ch'ang in *Hua Chien* when he wrote:

"As to Chao Ch'ang he was skilled in the use of colours, but if one looks for structural method (*ku fa*) or for reverberation of the life-breath (*ch'i yün*), his paintings are not so good. Painters such as T'eng Ch'ang-yü, Ch'iu Ch'ing-yü, Ko Shou-ch'ang, Ts'ui Po, Ai Hsüan and Ting K'uang carried on (the same general current) though each one developing a school of his own. Briefly (it should be known) that

¹ Quoted in *P'ei-wên chai shu-hua p'u*, vol. 30, p. 28.

Pien Luan of T'ang and Hsü Hsi and Huang Chüan of Sung have served as models for old and modern masters in the field of flower and bird-painting. It may be said of them, that before them was no one and after them came nobody."

* * *

Considering the abundant production of pictures with motifs from the life of flowers, insects, birds and other gentle representatives of the non-human realms of Nature, it seems surprising that the pictures of quadrupeds (horses, oxen, and dogs) from this same period are not more common. It is true that four men of the Five Dynasties are listed in the *Hsüan-ho hua-p'u* as animal-painters, but they have not reached prominent places in Chinese art-history and no works by them are known either in originals or copies. Yet there are some important pictures of animal life traditionally classified as works of this period which should not be forgotten at this place, even if they cannot be attached to a definite master. They stand on a level with the best *genre* and flower-paintings described above and may be said to fall in line with our ideas about particular merits and characteristics of painting during the Five Dynasties.

The pictures form part of the Palace Museum collection and are known under the titles *A Herd of Deer in an Autumn Forest* and *Calling Deer among Red-leaved Maples*. They correspond in size and motifs, forming a pair, or possibly are portions of a larger decorative ensemble executed for some princely mansion (Pl. 143).

The motif, as indicated by the titles, is in both cases a herd of deer in a forest in autumn; the setting is the same in both cases, but the grouping and the characterization of the animals among the trees show considerable differences. In the first-named picture most of the fawns and hinds are resting and grazing on the mossy ground or drinking at a pool, while a proud stag stands in a watchful attitude, lowering his antlered head as if to meet an approaching

danger. In the second picture all the animals are on their feet; they are pausing for a moment in an open glade before they start to run. The leader of the herd has raised his head with its magnificent antlers, the hinds behind him are poised, ready to jump; others further away are turning their necks or stretching out their legs uneasily. The drooping foliage of the big trees hangs in thick draperies around the scene, which opens into the silent depths of the forest. This is the better preserved though less known of the two pictures, because it was not sent to the London Exhibition together with its counterpart, nor was it reproduced in the Chinese catalogue¹ (Pl. 142).

The compositions may to some extent be observed in the reproductions, but the exceptional beauty of the colour can be realized only before the original. It is rather light, yet full and deep; the large-leaved maples form a rich and soft pattern of grey, reddish brown and pink as of a finely woven tapestry. The slender forms and soft chestnut-coloured fur of the deer harmonize singularly well with the shapes and tones of the trees. The decorative transposition of the motif has been carried out with perfect balance in colouring and design. There is something momentary and at the same time fundamental, or permanent, about these pictures of the life of the vigilant animals in the silent woods. They are not only instantaneous records of shy watchfulness in rhythms of graceful movements, but also visionary interpretations of the never-ceasing pulse of Nature, the "Great Breath" that animates woods and mountains as well as flowers and birds, and every atom of manifested life.

¹ The *Herd of Deer in an Autumn Forest*, which was included in the London Exhibition, was described by Sir Percival David in his article "The Chinese Exhibition" (1935) in *Revue des Arts Asiatiques*, IX, 4, as "one of the greatest Chinese paintings yet seen in the West". "The composition is masterly, the colouring soft and harmonious, the draughtsmanship of unsurpassed skill." But the other one, here reproduced, is perhaps still more remarkable, because of its better conservation and more effective colouring.

The Beginnings of Romantic Landscape-painting

I

Introduction

THE GREATEST artistic achievements of this period were, however, accomplished in the field of monochrome landscape-painting. It was the kind of art that corresponded most closely to the spirit of the age, the pantheistic attitude towards Nature evoked by Ch'an Buddhism and its contiguous demand for a more or less impressionistic method of expression. Whereas the painters of illustrative subjects and the like followed rather closely stylistic and technical traditions of the T'ang period, the landscape-painters took a more independent stand and developed methods which hitherto had been little tried.

Practically all the painters who won their fame as landscapists in this period worked pre-eminently in monochrome ink, though they used it in different ways, some working with defining lines and contours, others with dots and splashes, but all striving to render those indefinable elements of space and atmosphere by which the forms of the objective world become parts of a greater whole. Wang Wei may indeed have realized something of this, but he still adhered to old-fashioned manners of drawing and definition in detail; the significance of his landscapes was less dependent on the representation of space than on what might be called the atmospheric tone and their illustrative qualities. They were, in other words, more descriptive than visionary or impressionistic in intent as well as in execution.

This artistic position was gradually modified in the works of the great landscape-painters of the tenth century. Their works have a more unified visionary character like ideas projected from the

consciousness of the artists and interpreted in values of ink-tones and brush-strokes. Their relation to objective nature was a new one. They studied it and learned from it the essential elements of which their pictures were composed, but they did not aim at descriptive representation. Their ideal was rather to create like Nature herself, to visualize their ideas in shapes of mountains, waters, and trees, to make the pictures unfold or grow, as do things in nature, according to a certain plan or vision. They carried the whole thing over into the world of creative thought, where the limits of material representation no longer hold good. Space became to them something more than the distance between two points, or the absence of forms; it became the element in which their creations unfolded, a reflex or symbol of the limitless world of thought. They made no efforts to define or to limit it, because it was the very substance out of which their pictures were made.

Their pictures have no perspective (in our sense of the word), no measurable distances, no fixed viewpoint. For the artist's eye (his viewpoint) moves over the scroll – be it horizontal or vertical – as the thoughts which he is expressing in pictorial form, symbolically, take their places one by one on the pictorial plane. And as the thoughts are co-ordinated in relation to his consciousness, so are the forms balanced in relation to space; their significance becomes dependent on this relationship, on their power to reveal or to suggest this underlying consciousness, to convert it into painting, *i.e.* into space. It becomes the most eloquent medium for expressing a reality beyond material forms.

The painters have all insisted on this, explicitly or implicitly, and they have used various means in developing it. Some did it mainly by their designs, by the way in which the forms were distributed on the empty sheet. Others did it more by tone, by painting an atmosphere of mist or haze in which the forms are enveloped and gradually lost. It is evident that the handling of the ink and the touch of the brush are of great importance in this respect; the succession of tones is, as a rule, far more eloquent than the gradual diminishing of the material forms or the like. For it is less the optical effect that is sought than the suggestion which will reach or open the consciousness of the beholder and attune it to that of the painter.

The motifs and compositional elements of the landscapes show little variation. In most of them we find towering mountains with rushing streams, trees on the slopes and in the crevices, sometimes small buildings and distant temples upon terraces; or in pictures of another type, promontories with trees and huts in the foreground, stretches of calm

water and mountain silhouettes in the background. There are also winding roads, high bridges and rustic boats, but the human beings are as yet quite small and of minor importance; they have not reached the prominence that they acquired in the landscapes of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. It is a primordial rugged nature that these early landscapes represent, too grand to be dominated by human individuals.

Some of the painters of this period and of the first decades of the Sung dynasty have also left fragmentary records transmitted by word of mouth about their art, which their pupils and followers repeated and systematized into treatises on the methods and aims of landscape-painting. These can hardly be said to contain the exact words of the painters whose name they bear, but they reflect, more or less faithfully, their attitude towards nature and its transmission in painting. The essential portions of two of these treatises will consequently be communicated in this and a following chapter devoted to some early landscape-painters of the Sung period.

II

Ching Hao and his Discourse on Painting, Kuan T'ung and Kuo Chung-shu

THE OLDEST of these masters of monochrome landscape-painting was Ching Hao, or Hung-ku-tzū, as he called himself. His activity belongs to the first half of the tenth century. He was a native of Ch'in-shui in Honan, but passed many years of his life on the Shên-chêng mountain of the T'ai-hang range, where he, according to his own words, supported himself by tilling the soil. He loved solitude and life in grand and wild nature, where he could have his heart's desire of old gnarled pine-trees, mossy cliffs, mysterious caves and hollow-ways. He speaks of them as of well-known companions.

The pictures assigned to Ching Hao in various collections are all very imposing in their design, but not sufficiently homogeneous in execution to appear as the works of one single artistic personality. Most impressive among these so-called Ching Hao landscapes is the nearly six feet tall picture known through the reproduction in *Ku-kung shu-hua chi* (Vol. IV). According to the title (purporting to be written by the emperor Sung Kao-tsung, 1127-1168), it represents a view of Mount K'uang-lu in Chekiang. It is furthermore provided with inscriptions by Han Yü and K'o Chiu-ssü of the Yüan period (Pl. 144).

The motif is transformed with almost terrific energy into a grand paraphrase of steep cliffs and rushing streams. The mountains are massed together, wall behind wall, the furthest rising to an immense height, and split up in innumerable folds and wrinkles. The streams rush down and a path winds towards the water at the bottom. There are gnarled pines growing on some of the terraces, but they are relatively small and absorbed, so to speak, in the general design just like the bridges and the pavilions. Yet, everything is clearly stated, and the folds of the mountains are accentuated by a rhythmic alteration of light and shadow. The form seems to possess a certain degree of plastic relief, making us realize the successive vertical layers, the one behind the other, but they do not recede into the picture, they rather protrude or come out of it by degrees, the view being taken from above and opening up, so to speak, towards the bottom. It is impossible to tell from the reproduction to what extent the painter has succeeded in suggesting an atmosphere by tonal values, but even if something of the kind may be found here, it is evident that the execution is not on a level with the design, a lack of consistency which makes it more impressive in reproduction than in original.

The landscape attributed to Ching Hao in the Freer Gallery has evidently been cut down in size all around, but is nevertheless impressive on account of a rather uncommon boldness in design as well as in execution. The deeply creviced mountains are painted with strongly emphasized vertical and horizontal brush-strokes which serve to accentuate the ruggedness of the towering cliffs and confer a peculiar rhythm on the whole design. There are trees of many kinds on the terraces and men travelling along the mountain path, but all these details are now quite indistinct, the picture being worn and darkened by age. It is a rather unusual and interesting picture, but it has nothing in common with the landscape mentioned above.

A more extraordinary picture is the large winter landscape in the Nelson Gallery in Kansas City,

which bears the signature "Hung-ku-tzū" (the *hao* of Ching Hao) and is said to have been excavated in Shansi province (a statement borne out by the worn condition of the picture). Certain portions of the design are entirely missing, while the forms or lines, at other places, have been visibly retraced. These repairs and missing portions have not, however, altered the general character of the picture, which is quite unlike that of the above-mentioned so-called Ching Hao landscape.

The uncommon character of this picture does not reside simply in the archaic design of the deeply split towering rocks, the gnarled trees and the travellers in the hollow-ways, but also in the use of white colour to emphasize the relief of the mountain folds as well as the trees and the figures. This method was also noticeable in some of the winter landscapes ascribed to Wang Wei, but it has a stronger decorative emphasis in the present case. The archaic pattern of the design is obvious and apparently due to a prominent master, but the date of the execution seems to be later.

It may be of interest to recall here that Mi Fei inserted in *Hua Shih* a note about a picture by Ching Hao which was signed in the same way as the above-mentioned landscape. He tells that the famous collector and imperial kinsman Wang Chün-ch'ing once received a gift of two pictures which were wrongly attributed to Kou-lung Shuang. When he had them remounted, a signature was found on one of the pictures: "On a stone standing in the water, on the left side, below a smooth rock of greenish colour, was written Hung-ku-tzū Ching Hao's brush. It was not the work of a later man and had no resemblance to pictures that Fan K'uan did in later years" (i.e. under the influence of Ching Hao). Whether this signature contained all the words mentioned by Mi Fei or only the characters Hung-ku-tzū, is not quite clear from the statement of the author, but the record is a noteworthy confirmation of the tradition that Ching Hao sometimes placed signatures consisting of his *hao* at quasi-hidden places near the edge of the paintings. It furnishes no proof

of the actual age of the picture mentioned above, but strengthens the connexion with the Ching Hao tradition as it survived in the Sung period.

* * *

Ching Hao's name has also been attached to an essay on landscape-painting called *Hua-shan-shui lu*, or *Pi-fa chü*, i.e. Records of Brush-work, which has been preserved in a literary form of somewhat later date.¹ It consists partly of descriptions of that grand mountain scenery with old pine-trees which was so dear to the romantic landscapists of the tenth century, and partly of a dialogue between an old sage and a young painter who is receiving some good advice regarding the mysteries of landscape-painting. Whether this young man of the essay, who gives a report of the conversation, should be identified with Ching Hao, is a question open to doubt, but it may at least be said that the discussion reflects the attitude towards nature and art which may be traced in the works of some of the best painters of this period.

When the young man meets the hermit in the forest of the T'ai-hang Mountain and tells him about his artistic occupations, the latter asks:¹ "Do you know the principles of brush-work? To this I replied: You seem to be an old uncouth rustic, how can you know anything about brush-work? The venerable man answered: How can you know what I carry in my bosom? I felt ashamed and surprised and listened to the old sage, who spoke: As you are young and wish to learn you may finally accomplish something. Well, then, there are six essentials in painting; the first is called *ch'i* (life-breath), the second *yün* (resonance), the third *ssü* (thought), the fourth *ching* (scenery), the fifth *pi* (brush), the sixth *mo* (ink). I said: Painting, that is to represent formal beauty, but it is important to obtain truth in likeness. Could that be wrong? The venerable man said: It is not so. Painting is to paint, to outline the forms of the objects and to grasp their true character. You should render the beauty of things as (formal) beauty and their inner essence as

reality. Formal beauty must never be taken for inner reality. He who does not understand this may obtain likeness in a haphazard way, but his pictures will not contain truth.

"I asked: What do you regard as likeness and what as truth? The venerable old man answered: Likeness can be obtained by shapes without life-breath, but when truth is reached, both life-breath and substance are fully expressed. Whenever one tries to transmit the life-breath through floridity (formal beauty), leaving it out of the image, the image will be dead.

"I thanked him and said: From this I realize that calligraphy and painting are occupations for wise men. Being only a farmer, I know that they are not my true occupations. I have been playing with the brush but cannot ultimately accomplish anything. With gratitude and shame I now receive your explanations: Really to paint – that I cannot.

"The venerable old man said: Lust and passions are the thieves of life. The wise occupy themselves with music, calligraphy and painting; they do not indulge in inordinate lusts. As you already show some inclination, I hope that you will continue with your studies to the very end without abating.

"Now I will explain to you the essentials of painting. As to *ch'i* (life-breath), it is to let the heart follow where the brush moves, then you will feel no hesitation in grasping the forms. As to *yün* (resonance); if the hidden things are allowed to take shape, then whatever you delineate will not be vulgar. As to *ssü* (thought); if you select and detach the most essential points, then your concentrated thoughts will render the objects. As to *ching* (scenery); if you regulate and estimate things according to season, then you will search out the wonderful and create (establish) the truth. As to *pi* (brush-work); it is to follow the rules of painting but to be free and flexible in the movements, not fixed and formal, but as it were, flying and moving.

¹ The Chinese text here used is the reprint in *Wang-shih hua-yüan*, vol.I.

As to *mo* (ink); if it varies in tone (is high and low), being sometimes thick, sometimes thin, the various objects will be shallow and deep, and colours which are natural will not seem to be laid on with the brush."

The six essentials of painting mentioned by the old sage may be considered as modifications of Hsieh Ho's Six Principles; they express practically the same ideas, though differently graded and combined. Points one and two correspond to Hsieh Ho's first principle, split into two; point three corresponds to Hsieh Ho's fifth principle (composition); point four relating to scenery and atmospheric effects, corresponds in a more limited way to Hsieh Ho's third and fourth principles, while the fifth and the sixth points, relating to brush-work and ink, correspond to Hsieh Ho's second principle. Ching Hao's points are evidently formulated with a special view to monochrome landscape painting and consequently less generalized than Hsieh Ho's Principles, which were meant for every kind of painting, but the fundamental philosophical concept is the same in both, and shortest expressed in the two words *ch'i* and *yin*.

The subsequent remarks of the old hermit serve mainly to emphasize and develop the importance of the spiritual significance or vitality which cannot be conveyed through any kind of formal beauty or outward resemblance, but must result from an intuitional grasp or sudden realization of the inner reality of the motifs – a concept which formed the very hub of the romantic attitude which was characteristic of the Taoists as well as of the Ch'an Buddhists. We shall meet it over and over again in the Chinese writings on landscape painting. This concept forms also the underlying criterion for the classification of the painters which Ching Hao offers in the continuation of the dialogue.

"The venerable old man said further: There are (*shen*) divine, (*miao*) wonderful (or profoundly mysterious), (*ch'i*) clever (or astounding), and (*ch'iao*) skilful (or able) painters. The divine painter makes no effort; he accomplishes the images

spontaneously (by the prompting of the spirit). The wonderful painter first searches heaven and earth and the characteristics of the ten thousand things with his thoughts. His lines will then conform with the various objects and they will flow out of his brush. The clever painter makes loose outlines quite out of measure, doing violence to real scenery. He who works out his line patterns in this way may have brush-work, but he has no thought. The skilful painter cuts out and pieces together small bits of nice things; he pretends to follow classic rules, but forces the drawing and exaggerates the life-breath as well as the forms. It may be said that he has not enough reality and makes too much display of formal beauty (floridity)."

The classification of the painters proposed by the venerable sage is based on the same aesthetic ideas as the system introduced by the T'ang critics such as Chang Yen-yüan (who took it over from Chang Huai-kuan's classification of calligraphy), but modified in so far as the former three classes have become four. The first two, *i.e.* the class of the divinely inspired painters, who achieve things without effort, and the class of the mysteriously wonderful painters, who work on the basis of preparatory intellectual studies, are practically the same as in Chang Yen-yüan's treatise, but the third class of the T'ang writer, called *nêng*, in which he placed the able or talented men, has in the later system become two classes, *i.e.* *ch'i*, the miraculous or astounding, and *ch'iao*, the skilful or clever painters; and it is the *ch'iao* rather than the *ch'i*-class that corresponds to the *nêng* class of the older system, while *ch'i*, the miraculous or astounding, painters seem to be more akin to the artists "unbound by all rules", who were placed in a special class, called the unrestrained, by Chu Ching-hsüan in the T'ang and Huang Hsiu-fu at the beginning of the Sung period. The writer of Ching Hao's dialogue was probably not familiar with the terminology of the last-named authors, but he too seems to have had a notion that the most astounding or untrammelled painters should be placed in a special class. He called this *ch'i*, and

considered it inferior to the divine and the mysteriously wonderful classes, whereas Huang Hsiu-fu placed his *i* class at the top of the scale. There are thus shades of differences in these classifications referring to the temperaments of the painters as well as to their techniques or manners of expression, but to speculate about these in detail seems rather futile since the expressions used by the various authors leave a wide margin of aesthetic speculation. It seems enough to bear in mind their general scope and tendency, which is nearly identical or parallel even though differently expressed.

The following paragraph in the Dialogue is devoted to the brush-work, which is said to possess four properties called sinews, flesh, bones, and life-breath, but these somewhat far-fetched corporeal parallels are not explained in a way which makes the various aspects more comprehensible. More significant from an aesthetic point of view is the definition of the two kinds of faults in painting now quoted below:

"There are two kinds of faults; those which depend on the forms, and others which are independent of the forms. Flowers and trees which are out of season, figures larger than the buildings, trees higher than the mountains, and bridges which do not rest on the banks are measurable faults of form. When the faults are of this kind the picture can no longer be altered. But faults which are independent of the forms quench the very resonance of the life-breath and make the images of the objects quite distorted. In spite of all activity with brush and ink everything in the picture is dead. Such clumsy patterns cannot be improved or corrected."

In other words, the criterion of a work of art does not pre-eminently depend on the correct representation of the objects in nature and their relative sizes and proportions. Things may be out of common reason or of proportion and yet serve the purpose of the artist. Minor faults do not necessitate the recasting of a whole design, if only the work is permeated by the artist's *ch'i yün*, which is another implication of the old statement that real works of art must be

produced spontaneously like Nature's own creations, without intellectual deliberations or calculation, and the poorest are those which are the results of laborious skill. This view, which is well known to us from the writings by Chang Yen-yüan, is primarily based on Taoist philosophy.

The succeeding paragraphs of the Dialogue consist of some observations on the formal elements in landscape-painting, such as the trees, the mountains and the water; they do not contribute any new aesthetic ideas but offer some additional information about the studies and motifs of the landscape-painters. The venerable old man continues:

"As you like to paint landscapes with clouds and trees, it is necessary for you to understand the origin of every form in nature. Every tree grows according to its natural disposition. The pine-trees may grow crooked, but they are never too tortuous. They stand sometimes densely, sometimes scattered, and they are neither green nor blue. They are upright from the very beginning. Even the saplings of their hearts do not hang their heads, their nature makes them solitary and high. Their branches grow low down but bend in an opposite direction and do not droop to the ground. They seem to divide the forest into layers upon layers, so upright are they, like 'the virtue of the superior man, which is like the wind'.¹ In some pictures they are like soaring old dragons or coiling young dragons, with their branches and needles in confusion, but that is not the spirit and rhythm of the pine-trees.

"The nature of the *arbor vitae* is to move and twist; it is complex but not flourishy. Its joints are varied and its veins turn after the sun. The needles are like knotted threads, the branches as if clothed with hemp. In some pictures they are like serpents or twisted ropes and seem to turn unnaturally without reason.

"There are, furthermore, catalpas, pawlonias, ailantus, oaks, elms, willows, mulberry-trees and

¹ Cf. *Analects*, Book XII, ch. 19. "The virtue (moral character) of the superior man is the wind, the characters of those below is the grass. When the grass has the wind upon it, it certainly bends."

sophora japonica (*huai shu*). Every one of them is different in form and natural characteristics. They are like far-off thoughts which must be instantly brought together and clearly distinguished."

The following paragraph opens with the significant statement that "the formal aspects of a landscape must be such that the life-breath and the outlines are mutually productive"; but in illustrating this idea the old sage gives hardly anything more than an enumeration of the usual elements of a landscape, such as peaks, hillocks, mountain ranges, precipices, grottoes, gulleys, ravines, streamlets and torrents, which should all be correctly rendered and diversified.

"Those who paint landscapes without such formal aspects are not right. There are pictures in which the water is represented in wild confusion; the lines are like disjointed threads and there are no rising and falling waves. These are also incorrect.

"Mist, clouds and vapours should be light or heavy according to the season. Their effect depends on the wind, the forms are not all fixed. One must leave out a mass of minor details and stick to the essentials, and be able to understand what is right and what is wrong before one can master the method of painting."

The youth then asks: "Who were the best among the learned painters of old?" In answering the question the sage mentions Lu T'an-wei, Chang Sêng-yu and Chang Tsao, the man who first developed the method of using the ink in broad washes. "No one in ancient or modern times has surpassed him" – a verdict which clearly shows that the speaker was an enthusiastic supporter of monochrome ink-painting of the untrammelled or spontaneous type. A confirmation of this may also be found in his high estimation of Ch'ü T'ing, who became the Taoist monk Li Tsum-shih, active in the tenth century and particularly known for his pictures of pine-trees. Wang Wei's brush-work is characterized as "subtle and refined", his *ch'i yün* as "noble and pure; he was most skilful in representing things, yet he was moved by true thoughts". General

Li's pictures are said to exhibit great skill and ornamental beauty, but to be weak in the handling of ink.

More interesting than the above remarks is the old man's high appreciation of the little-known painter Hsiang Jung – nick-named the Hermit of the T'ien-t'ai Mountain – who painted his trees and stones in a rough, apparently careless manner without structural drawing and yet "did not lose the true spirit and form of things". In other words, he was one of the great masters of the *p'o mo* style.

Wu Tao-tzū is shortly characterized as a supreme master of the brush, never surpassed in form, bone (structure) and life-breath (spirit), but wanting in ink; a criticism which in the time of Ching Hao had become traditional.

To the above the old man adds the names of Ch'ên Jo-yü and the monk Tao-fên, whose "manner of handling the brush and the ink had nothing extraordinary, though they were effective in drawing the forms". It may seem surprising that these two little-known Taoist monks are mentioned in the exclusive company of some of the most famous masters, but they are evidently introduced for the same reason as the other hermits and monks – Chang Tsao, Chü T'ing and Hsiang Jung – who were all more or less successful representatives of the kind of monochrome ink-painting which formed the technical basis for the new school of landscape-painting that was the ideal of the venerable old sage. He must have been a firmly convinced supporter of the stylistic current which later became known as the Southern School.

The discourse winds up with some mutual thanks and exhortations. The young man had to do some drawings on the spot as evidence of his comprehension of the instruction he had received, and they were then submitted to the old man's scrutiny. In addition to these, he composed a poem in eulogy of an old pine-tree and assured the old sage that he never would forget or disregard the teaching that he had received.

"The old man sighed and said after a long silence:

Be diligent; you may then forget all about brush and ink and still obtain the truth of the scenery. I live on the Stone Drum Mountain and therefore I call myself Shih-k'ü yen-tzū. I said: May I follow you and serve you? The venerable old man answered: That is not necessary; and saying this, he suddenly left, never to be found again." But his teachings were remembered and treasured not only by the young man of the Dialogue, but also by many of his companions along the same path of landscape-painting.

* * *

Kuan T'ung is often named together with Ching Hao, whose style and general direction he followed as a landscape-painter, but originally he was a pupil of Pi Hung; in later years "his fame excelled that of his teacher". He was a native of Ch'ang-an and was active during the first quarter of the tenth century at the court of the Posterior Liang dynasty in Lo-yang(?).

According to the tradition, reported by Liu Tao-ch'un in *Wu-tai ming-hua pu-i*, Kuan T'ung studied with such concentration that he neglected both sleep and food; his aim was to surpass Ching Hao (in which he succeeded), and it was afterwards said that "he made his own style in landscape-painting". At that time people came from all parts asking for works of his brush. The figures in his landscapes were, at his request, added on by Hu I from An-ting.

"In T'ung's pictures there were sharp and lofty mountains and below them open valleys. He selected the most sheer precipices and rendered them with a single stroke of the brush. His forms were carefully selected and bubbled out (under his brush)."

In *T'u-hua chien-wên chih* (I, 13), Kuo Jo-hsiü also expresses the greatest admiration for Kuan T'ung, whom he combines with the two foremost landscape-painters of the early Sung period, though he says that Kuan learned his art from Chung Hao. He epitomizes his opinion in the following words: "In landscape-painting only Li Ch'êng from Ying-

ch'iu, Kuan T'ung from Ch'ang-an and Fan K'uan from Hua-yüan were wonderful sages and reached the divine (level). They surpassed all others by the greatness of their natural gifts. These three masters stand like the legs of a tripod, and they will serve as models for a hundred generations."

If this juxtaposition of Kuan T'ung with the two early Sung masters was warranted by his artistic production, he must have been far ahead of his own generation, but there were critics who held a diverging opinion, particularly the ever-spiteful Mi Fei. He claims to have seen twenty pictures by Kuan T'ung and says that "the human figures in them are vulgar, but the rocks and trees are superior to those by Pi Hung; he painted tree branches without any trunks".

The most general characterization of Kuan T'ung's art, his motifs and manner of painting is given in *Hsüan-ho hua-p'u*:

"He was most skilful in painting the mountains of autumn with bare trees, and rustic hamlets and dangerous fords; hermits and retired scholars, fishermen and mountain couriers. Those who looked at his pictures felt as if suddenly transported to the Pa Bridge in wind and snow, or to the Three Gorges, where the gibbons may be heard crying, and then they wished no more to return to the dust and the crowds of the market-places and the courts.

"T'ung's pictures were done in a fluent fashion with a soft brush, and the more sketchy the brushwork the stronger was the life-breath, the simpler the scenery the deeper seemed the thoughts. His pictures had a profound meaning; they were noble and pure like T'ao Yüan-ming's poetry and Ho Jo's music. No ordinary painter could do such things."

The appreciation of Kuan T'ung in the Sung period (a century after his death) is confirmed by the relatively large number of pictures ascribed to him in the imperial catalogue; there were no less than ninety-four of them, but only half of this number are listed under special titles. The autumn views are most frequent among them, but there are

also spring mornings, summer rains, and winter scenes in snow.

An Lu-ts'un, the author of *Mo-yüan hui-kuan* (1746), praises a picture by Kuan T'ung in his own collection, called Travellers in Wintry Mountains, for its "divine spirit", which he characterizes as "luminous and brilliant". The composition consisted of a "large central mountain, high and lofty", which appeared "all round" (*i.e.* in strong relief). The effect of it was bold and startling. The bulging forms were painted with "brush-strokes of various kinds, some coarse, some fine, some abrupt, some continuous", while the effect of the wrinkles was increased with washes of ink. But there were also buildings along the mountain side, "thatched huts and a rural inn, birds and animals such as hens, dogs, donkeys and pigs, as well as guests who were coming and going - everything absolutely true to nature".

If we may trust the author, the picture was not only grand and imposing, but also intimate and entertaining, revealing a closer observation of actual scenery and animal life than we know from other paintings of the time. But neither this, nor any other documented Kuan T'ung pictures survive; the landscapes which nowadays are honoured with his name are few and uneven. They can hardly be said to represent a very distinct or impressive homogeneous style.

The most prominent of the landscapes ascribed to Kuan T'ung is, to my knowledge, the picture in the Palace collection called The Ford of the Mountain Stream (Pl. 145), a title which recurs in *Hsüan-ho hua-p'u*. It is of medium size ($4\frac{1}{2} \times 3'$) and executed with ink and slight colours on silk.¹ The composition is well balanced; the dominating mountain in the middle of the picture is built up of huge boulders, the one above and beyond the other, as if they were gradually protruding towards the front. Along the crests are shrubs and trees and at the foot of the bulging rocks are some low buildings and a broadening stream. The enormous size of these elements of nature becomes evident when we discover the diminutive man on the further shore,

who is driving his donkey down to the ford. The animal and the man are hardly larger than ants, and we are thus made to realize that the view is rendered as if seen from a great height. The execution is, however, very careful and rich in detail, the successive layers and boulders are brought out to a degree of form and consistency which makes them far more real than the somewhat compressed and chopped mountains in the pictures assigned to Ching Hao. If this picture actually is accepted as a characteristic specimen of Kuan T'ung's art, it must be admitted that he was hardly less developed than Li Ch'êng and Fan K'uan, but judging by the reproduction, it looks more like a somewhat modernized version of an early design than like an original of the tenth century.

A somewhat smaller picture ascribed to Kuan T'ung which was formerly in the Yang Yin-pei collection in Peking, may be seen in the Yurinkan (Fujii collect.) in Kyôto. It represents a sloping and crumbling mountain ridge that stretches diagonally across the picture, and at its foot some fine buildings on the promontory. The painter's name is written in the manner of the emperor Hui-tsung, and there are several lengthy inscriptions on the margins by writers of the Ming and Ch'ing periods in which the attribution is confirmed. The decorative merits of the design are obvious, but the brush-work is more elegant than firm or structural, reflecting the spirit of the seventeenth century rather than that of the pre-Sung period.

Better known than this, owing to frequent reproductions,² is the large landscape in the Saito collection, which represents another ford of a mountain stream with people on the shore waiting for the ferry. The title of the picture and the artist's name were written at the top by Prince Yü in the year 1011. To what extent this inscription may be considered authentic, is more than I can tell; the case is complicated by the fact that the picture, as it

¹ *Ku-kung shu-hua chi*, vol. VIII.

² Good reproductions of the pictures in the Saito catalogue *Tsum-zô* and in *Nan Shu Ikatu*, etc.

exists today, is not a unified creation but a patch-work made up of at least three different pieces¹ which have been skilfully joined to make something that may pass as an early picture. The composition is lacking in organic unity, and if it contains some "ink-remains" of Kuan T'ung's art, these have been arbitrarily re-integrated (Pl. 146).

If we may believe the old critics, Kuan T'ung was the most accomplished of the landscape-painters active in the Five Dynasties period, more advanced in poetic conception and in brush-work than Ching Hao. But to give an exact estimate of his superiority on the basis of the works that still pass under his name would be futile, since none of them has the stamp of indisputable genuineness.

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None of the other landscape-painters active about the middle of the tenth century, or shortly after, who are mentioned in the chronicles of Liu Tao-ch'un and Kuo Jo-hsü, achieved the same fame as Kuan T'ung, nor are they better known through still existing paintings, but the literary records are in one or two cases sufficiently interesting to merit our attention.

This is true of the records about Kuo Chung-shu.² He was born at Loyang, probably a decade or so before the middle of the century. At the age of seven he could recite the Classics and compose literary essays and was made a *T'ung-tzū* (a special degree conferred upon boys of exceptional literary ability). The founder of the Posterior Chou dynasty (951-954) appointed him to the position of an Assistant Genealogist for the Imperial Clan and Professor of Calligraphy in the Academy, and made him finally the Great Expounder of the Book of Changes (*Chou-i po-shih*). But at the beginning of the Chien-lung era (960-963) Kuo Chung-shu – excited by wine – came to blows with the censor in the Audience Hall, and when the censor wrote a deposition against him, he made a clerk steal the document and destroyed it. He was then sent as a

revenue officer to Ch'ien-chou (in Kuangtung,) but there he went on drinking, fought with his inferiors, transgressed the rules, and left his place of banishment without permission. His name was removed from the "Register", he was degraded and sent to Ling-wu (the present Ning-hsia in the far Northwest).

"From this time onward he led a wandering life, roaming about in the region between Ch'i, Yung, Loyang and the capital. Through his constant drinking he became increasingly reckless. Whenever he met some people, noble or mean, he simply shouted at them. But when he came to a place of beautiful scenery, he would linger there for ten or twelve days quite unable to go away. Sometimes he would not eat for more than a month; his body would not perspire even when exposed to the heat of summer days, and in the winter he hacked a hole in the ice on the river and took a bath. The people were much astonished at his endurance."

The strange habits of Kuo Chung-shu did not, however, prevent T'ai-tsung (Sung dynasty), who had heard of his fame, from appointing him Keeper of the Records of the Imperial Academy and giving him the Silver Girdle and 50,000 cash. He was particularly ordered to make a study of the history of the script. The emperor felt much sympathy for him, because of his talents, and showed leniency even when he behaved recklessly and neglected rules of propriety. But he became more and more addicted to wine and slanderous talking; at last he secretly sold documents from his office and kept the money. He was then sentenced to capital punishment, but by imperial favour this was reduced to flogging with bamboo twigs and banishment to Têng-chou (in Shantung) in the year 977. "When he had reached Lin-i, in Ch'i-chou, he said to the official who escorted him: 'I shall soon be gone'. Then he made a hole in the ground, large enough to

¹ The remark is based on renewed examination of the picture by Dr. S. Shimada, communicated orally.

² The most complete account of Kuo Chung-shu's life is in the *Sung History*, vol. 442, Biogr. 201, but some additional material is transmitted in *T'a-hua chieh-nên chih*, III.

contain his face, and as he stooped down and looked into it, he passed away.

"He was buried at the side of the road in a mat. Several months later some old friends of his came to fetch the corpse in order to give it a proper burial. They found that his body was as light and empty as the shell of a cicada."

As a painter Kuo Chung-shu excelled in representing the intricate constructions of fine buildings. Motifs of this kind seem to have attracted him in particular, possibly because they demanded an uncommon degree of intellectual calculation and great exactness in draughtsmanship. His skill in this respect was unsurpassed; it is said that he rendered not only the general appearance of the buildings, but also the details of their constructive framework. This caused great admiration, and Kuo became in later times known as the foremost representative of *chih hua*, measured or boundary, painting, i.e. pictures of buildings done with the exactness of architectural models. His skill in this respect is particularly commended by T'ang Hou, who in his "Discussion of Painting" (c.1330) wrote as follows:¹ "Common people used to say that there are thirteen different kinds of painting, the first of which is landscape and the last boundary-painting. From this it has been concluded that boundary (measured) painting is easily done..." (This is a mistake, because as the most skilled carpenters seldom are able to master the intricacies of all the constructive details, it must be still more difficult for the painters to represent them with the use of squares and the compasses.) "Every other branch of painting has had its representatives in ancient times; only boundary-painting was not practised by any one in the T'ang period. But at the end of the Five Dynasties period Kuo Chung-shu appeared and also some minor artists like Wang Shih-yüan and Chao Chung-i... When Chao Mêng-fu (the contemporary of the author) instructed his son Yung in boundary-painting he said: In most kinds of painting it is possible to dazzle the eyes of the people even if one neglects the rules, but in boundary-painting it is

not possible; here one is obliged to keep strictly to the rules" (i.e. make things fit properly). "True indeed", adds the author.

The most important architectural piece of this kind, nowadays honoured with the name of Kuo Chung-shu (in spite of its later date), is the large picture in the Abe collection, which according to the inscription, represents The Summer Palace of the T'ang emperor Ming-huang. The numerous pavilions and courts which form this magnificent architectural composition are arranged step-wise on the terraces of a mountain slope. The highest mountains are hidden in the clouds and suggest an unseen world of celestial beauty. A broad river winds down into the valley, adding a note of peaceful grandeur to the wild scenery, whereas the many intricate details of the pillared galleries, balustrades and the bracketed roofs of the lofty pavilions are rendered with the help of mechanical means such as plumb-line, foot-rule and square (Pl.147).

Kuo Jo-hsü transmits traditions according to which Kuo Chung-shu also did paintings in a very spontaneous manner whenever he was in the right mood.² He tells about the painter's visits to governor Kuo Tsung-i's mountain retreat, where his host used to spread white silk, chalk and ink before him so as to make him paint. Several months sometimes passed before the painter, suddenly, excited by wine, would dash off some mountain-ridges in a corner of a picture. But even such sketches were considered very precious by the governor. Another *amateur* of painting, anxious to obtain some specimens of his brush, was the wine-merchant in Ch'ü, who entertained the painter with excellent wine and placed scrolls of silk and paper before him so as to make him paint, though with rare success. Once, however, Kuo Chung-shu suddenly grasped a long paper scroll and at the very head of it painted a small boy with two tufts of hair, holding a string on a reel. At the other end of the scroll he painted a kite, and between

¹ In *Hua Chüen, Lun hua*, vol.XIII of *Shuo fu* (modern edit.) Cf. Waley, *op. cit.*, p.185.

² Cf. *T'u-hua chüen-wên chih*, Part III.

them he drew a line, tens of feet long. He did it for the son of the merchant who, however, found nothing extraordinary in the performance, but simply said "Thank you" and went away!

If all that is told of Kuo Chung-shu is true, he must have been a man of remarkable gifts, though it may be said that his genius was imprisoned in a dark "double" (like a Dr. Hyde), which led him into dangerously crooked by-ways. Yet he too made his final escape like the cicada leaving its shell.

* * *

The above-mentioned painters were all active in central China, but there were, in the same period, other landscape-painters in Nanking and Ch'eng-tu, who also reached considerable fame. Of the Ch'eng-tu painters, recorded in *I-chou ming-hua lu*, Li Shêng and Tu K'ai deserve to be recalled. The first-named, who was active during the Former Shu dynasty (908-925), painted frescoes in some of the Buddhist temples as well as landscapes. He is said to have started by imitating a famous scroll by the

T'ang painter Chang Tsao, but to have gradually formed a style of his own based on intensive study of the actual scenery in Shu. As he rose in fame he was honoured with the appellation "The Little General Li", and thus placed on a level with one of the greatest masters of antiquity. But according to Huang Hsin-fu, the author of *I-chou ming-hua lu*, his pictures were often by mistake considered as works by Wang Wei. The remark tends to show that Wang Wei's influence was considerable even in far-off Shu and that Li Shêng was a more old-fashioned master than Kuan T'ung, for instance. He painted sites in Shu, such as The Three Gorges, Mount Omi, The Wu-liang River and also the thenceforward often repeated motif Rain on the Hsiao and Hsiang Rivers, pictures which, according to the Sung critic, became "the silent teachers of later generations". In *Hua Shih Mi Fei* also expresses great admiration for Li Shêng and characterizes his manner as a "combination of delicacy and skill", which serves to increase our regret that we know no reliable material on which a visual impression of Li Shêng's landscape-style could still be based.

The Great Landscape-painters of the Early Sung Period

I

The Northerners: Li Ch'êng, Fan K'uan and Hsü Tao-ning

THE GENERATION of landscape-painters which was active during the first century of the Sung period comprised a number of artists whose names are among the most famous in Chinese art-history and often associated with pictures of great interest. The best known among them are Li Ch'êng, Fan K'uan, Tung Yüan, Chü-jan, Hsü Tao-ning, and Yen Wên-kuei, but besides these there were a number of less renown. They followed more or less closely in the wake of Ching Hao and Kuan T'ung, but did not represent a unified school or current of style. On the contrary, each one of these masters developed a style or a manner of his own which may be observed in pictures traditionally associated with his name even though very few of these are originals. Their attitude towards nature and its transformation in art was fundamentally the same as that of their predecessors of the Five Dynasties period, but they were more advanced in a formal and technical sense and thus better fitted to interpret "the great message of forests and streams", which finally was also explained in words by Kuo Hsi.

The two first-named, Li Ch'êng and Fan K'uan, were, as pointed out in the preceding chapter, grouped by Kuo Jo-hsi together with Kuan T'ung as the three main supports or principal models of landscape-painting for future generations. According to him, all the subsequent painters, including such prominent masters as Wang Shih-yüan, Yen Wên-kuei, Hsü Tao-ning, Kao K'o-ming, Kuo Hsi and Li Tsung-ch'êng, stood in the same relation to the three great masters "as the various philosophers in their relation to the true Classics".

Their importance for the subsequent development was no doubt very great. Their works were eagerly collected and discussed by critics and amateurs in the Sung period; and when in the Yüan period, monochrome landscape-painting reached another high-water mark in China, the best among these early masters became highly admired models. And then towards the end of the Ming period, when Tung Ch'i-ch'ang introduced his speculative theory about the evolution of landscape-painting, the most famous among them were proclaimed ancestors of what was then called the "Southern School".

* * *

Li Ch'êng was probably the oldest in this generation. He belonged to a well-known Ch'ang-an family of Confucian scholars which moved to Ying-ch'in (Ch'ing-chou) in Shantung at the time when the local dynasty in Ch'ang-an was defeated by the Sung emperor (c.969). At that time Li Ch'êng was already a mature painter. According to tradition, he was a precocious youth, who loved wine, music and chess, but he must also have acquired knowledge of the classics, because finally he passed the *chin shih* examination.

His official career came, however, to nothing, and his time seems to have been divided mainly between painting and drinking. His somewhat overbearing manner towards the official world is illustrated in anecdotes related by Liu Tao-ch'ün, but they have no bearing on his art, except that they show that he was of a proud nature who cared little about honours and did not like to part with his pictures for money.

The only thing that could make him paint was wine. The author continues:¹

"His paintings were as fine as the creations of Nature; when the brush-work was done, the idea was completely expressed. With the sweep of his brush he could represent a thousand miles within the space of a foot square, and render inexhaustible effects within the size of a hand. He painted the peaks and the mountain ridges, one behind the other, and among them temples and villas, beautifully displayed. The forests were dense and thin, the flowing water deep and shallow as in real nature. His ideas were pure and his style highly accomplished and none of the old masters were equal to him.² In the Ching-yu era (1034-1037) a grandson of Li Ch'êng, who then was governor of K'ai-fêng, sent a messenger to buy up for high prices all the pictures by Li (that could be found), consequently there are nowadays very few left."

Mi Fei writes in *Hua Shih* that he had seen some three hundred imitations, but only two authentic pictures by Li Ch'êng: "Of Li Ch'êng's works I have seen only two, the one representing pines and stones, the other a landscape divided into four scrolls. The former came from Shêng Wên-su and is now in my studio; the landscape, which is a most beautiful and unusual picture, belonged to the priest Pao-yüeh in Suchou. The pine-trees are straight and strong; their branches and needles form a shady thicket. The shrubs around it are not painted in a confused manner like dragons, snakes, or goblins. But as to the large pictures in the collections of noblemen, their attribution to Li Ch'êng is just as impossible as the attribution of the signboards of certain drug-shops to Yen Lu-kung and Liu Kung-ch'üan. They give the outward appearance, but they are vulgar and not natural. The trees of the forests are in these pictures all spread about. The pine-trees are rotten and poor and full of joints, and the minor trees look like fire-wood; they are dead and meaningless . . . They are all commonplace things under false names. I should like to maintain the non-existence of Li Ch'êng."

After such a denouncement by Mi Fei, it is rather surprising to find no less than 159 pictures listed under Li Ch'êng's name in *Hsuan-ho hua-p'u*, a very large number, even if all the available pictures by the master had been secured for the imperial collection. Mi Fei tells something about this in the following entry in his *Hua Shih*, but does not seem to accept more than four of the palace pictures as genuine:

"The large fans in my collection by various painters from Li Ch'êng down to Li Kuan-ch'ing offer me enjoyment without end. They are really excellent. When the imperial envoy Sung Yung-ch'ên (on his return from Suchou) saw them, he sighed deeply and said: 'The empress Tz'ü-shêng Kuang-hsien (wife of the emperor Jên-tsung) bought all the pictures by Li Ch'êng that she could find and had them fitted into wind-screens'. The emperor enjoyed them every time he came. When the wife of the vice-president of Wu Ch'ung-ch'ing came to the court, she was taken by the emperor to see them in order that she might separate the genuine ones from the imitations, she being the grand-daughter of Li Ch'êng."

"She recognized four of these paintings as genuine; they were presented to the emperor, who furthermore bought some others to complete his collection. The emperor ordered me (Sung Yung-ch'ên) to remount these pictures in the East Gate studio. They were exactly like these (in your collection).

"Sung Yung-ch'ên asked me most earnestly to handle them with care, and to me also they are very valuable. Later on I got the scroll on paper, representing pine-trees and stones. The trunks of the trees were straight and rigid like roof-beams, their branches rich and shadowy. In painting their joints Li Ch'êng did not use circles of ink but simply thick

¹ *Shêng-ch'ao ming-hua p'ing*, p. 19.

² A somewhat similar characterization of Li Ch'êng's art is expressed by Kuo Jo-hau in the words: "In Li Ch'êng's works the air is chilly and the misty groves give the impression of extreme desolation. His genius is revealed at the point of his brush, and he uses the ink in a subtle way."

dots, representing the body of the trunk as a continuous whole. He gave a light tone to the empty spaces and made it thus look like a work of Nature. . . ."

The extreme scarcity of Li Ch'êng's authentic works is emphasized also by other writers and in the *Hsüan-ho Hua-p'u* we are reminded of the confusion caused by the more or less successful followers of Li Ch'êng who provided their imitations with his signature and seal: "After his death his fame became still greater and his pictures more rare. Consequently the students of Li Ch'êng did many imitations of his pictures of peaks and mountain ranges, streams and rocks and went even to the extent of writing his name and *tsü* on their paintings, creating this confusion in order to cheat people. Yet they do not always succeed in this, because there are connoisseurs who know how to distinguish and classify (the pictures)."

But such connoisseurs must by the force of circumstances be more rare today than they were eight hundred years ago, shortly after the death of the master; and it may thus be questioned whether any of the pictures which still pass under his name are authentic products of his brush. But even if none of them can be claimed with certainty as an original by the master, some of them no doubt represent his compositions, and when they are executed by competent painters they acquire a value of their own besides being representative of the style or type of art which was introduced by Li Ch'êng.

Most of these pictures represent views of bleak and dreary country, rocky slopes or sandy plains in late autumn when the ground is bare and the leafless trees shivering in chilly air, but he has also pictured winter scenes with snow on mountain ridges and heavy mist rising from deep gullies where water is gathering from mountain streams. There is in some of these landscapes an undertone of desolation and loneliness which at times becomes very appealing. The painter has a peculiar way of individualizing Nature's cyclic transformations; he senses the hard grip of quivering shrubs hanging down over

precipices, and shares the life of old trees which lift their writhing branches through the mist like withering hopes.

A large winter landscape in the Palace Museum is a good example of this romantic attitude. It represents a clump of old pine-trees on snow-covered rocks by a mountain stream where a fisherman in a small boat is occupied with his fishing-rod. The background is heavy grey mist, but out of it emerges a broad snow-clad mountain ridge from which a torrent drops right down into invisible depths. The loftiness of the design in conjunction with the shifting tones of transparent grey and the intrinsic characterization of the bare trees make this picture a significant work of art (PL148). There is an atmosphere of silent thought about it that only a real master could evoke. We have no other reason to discard the traditional attribution expressed in two lengthy inscriptions of the Ming period than the somewhat coarse or rugged brushwork.¹

None of the other pictures in the Palace Museum collection seems to equal the above in quality or intrinsic beauty, yet some of them are interesting as renderings of Li Ch'êng's compositions. Remarkable in this respect is the one representing two tall pine-trees on a low shore in winter. The trees fill the whole height of the picture, and the marked contrast between the verticals and horizontals serves to emphasize the monumentality of the design and its decorative effect, but the brush-work is somewhat dry and not characteristic of the Sung period.² The picture may have been executed four or five hundred years later, yet it is worth remembering as a typical example of a design which has been often repeated by prominent painters of the Yüan and Ming periods (PL150).

Another famous composition by Li Ch'êng, known in more than one version, is the co-called *Tu-pei t'u* (Reading the Tablet), a title which refers to the man on muleback who has stopped in front of a large memorial tablet to read its inscription. A

¹ *K.-k. shu-hua chi*, vol. XXXI. Size, 5' 3" × 3' 1".

² *Ibid.*, vol. XXII.

servant is standing by, holding the reins of the mule. The tablet is raised at the foot of some sloping rocks, and behind it, growing out of the deep crevices, are some old trees which bend and writhe like fettered dragons. Their twisting branches, which seem to end in sharp gigantic claws, stretch out against the empty sky as if seeking some support in their struggle against age, decay and immobility. The apparent movement in the tortured shapes here releases the silent pathos inherent in so many of the painter's conceptions (Pl. 149).

The picture is one of the most famous of Li Ch'êng's creations, mentioned by some of the old chroniclers and copied more than once. The version in the Abe collection in the Ōsaka museum,¹ here illustrated, may not have been painted before the Ming period, to judge by the easy flowing broad washes of ink – but it seems to have preserved some characteristic qualities of the original. The signature contains the name not only of Li Ch'êng but also of Wang Hsiao, a less known contemporary painter who is said to have added the figures. Their connexion with the rest of the picture is as a matter of fact quite superficial, in the double sense of the word, because they seem to be added on later and play no parts in the almost dramatic ensemble of hoary trees, split rocks and sandy dunes, which all reflect the incessant struggle of cosmic forces.

Some of the same elements – i.e. the same kind of trees and rocks – may be observed in the picture in the Nelson Gallery in Kansas City known as *A Buddhist Temple on a Clear Day in the Mountains*. The general character of the picture is, however, quite different; it represents a quiet mood of nature in a carefully balanced and centralized landscape. The rather extensive temple pavilions which form the main illustrative motifs are laid out on a broad terrace or truncated mountain cone overgrown with tortuous trees and shrubs. Over these pavilions in the very centre rises an octagonal tower in several storeys – an important construction, but rather small and insignificant in comparison with the huge mountain cone that rises right behind and above the

tower, thus emphasizing the central character of the design. The picture is full of attractive details – various kinds of pavilions, gateways and bridges, as well as figures and animals – but these sink into relative insignificance amidst the gigantic mountains which look down from their lofty height on the human occupations below. The picture has no signature but at least one seal of the Sung period, and the attribution to Li Ch'êng can be followed back to the Ming period. (Size, 3' 8" × 1' 10" Pl. 151). If we are looking for formal supports for the attribution, we may find them in the drawing of the trees though it must be admitted that similar trees were also done by later followers of the same tradition (as for instance Hsü Tao-ning).

The well-known picture in the Boston Museum called *Travellers among Snowy Hills*, may be one of the two pictures mentioned under this title in the list of Li Ch'êng's works in *Hsüan-ho hua-p'u*, a fact which however (as explained before) carries little weight in regard to its attribution. The general characteristics of this picture are more primitive than those of the previously mentioned Li Ch'êng paintings. It contains elements reminding of Ching Hao's or Kuan T'ung's art. The mountain is built up of gigantic boulders and terraced rocks, but it fills only the lower part of the picture; more than half of it is empty silk which may be said to add a note of spaciousness or grandeur to the composition. It is now darkened and damaged in places, but one may still observe a number of well-defined details, such as the small shrubs and trees growing between the boulders, the travellers on the winding path, and the view along the rocky shore of the river that comes out from behind the mountain. And all these things are rendered in an almost miniature-like manner. If Li Ch'êng painted a landscape like this he must have been very young at the time and still closely dependent on his predecessors of the previous generation. The picture is certainly a work of the period and as such a rare original example of the stylistic tradition

¹ Cf. The Abe catalogue, *Sorakkan*, I, 8. Size, 4' 1½" × 3' 5½".

that survived from pre-Sung times, but it does not reveal any closer relation with the manner of Li Ch'êng (Pl. 152).

Li Ch'êng's influence on the following generation was of fundamental importance, and from the little we know about his activity, we are led to the conclusion that it was not based exclusively on the formal and technical merits of his paintings but also on his personality, his spiritual attitude or approach to the problems of artistic activity. His faculty of grasping the individual characteristics of the phenomena, and of rendering their life-breath, has been noted repeatedly in our descriptions. This is confirmed by some of the early writings on Li Ch'êng's paintings, as for instance the colophons by Tung Yu (from the beginning of the twelfth century), in which the mystic side of the master's genius and his contacts with Ch'an circles are indicated. The following may serve as an example:¹ "The pursuance of a single art to the very end in harmony with Tao was called by the ancients a supreme attainment. In looking at a picture by Hsien-hsi (Li Ch'êng) one is attracted by its shapes and forms, but it may happen that one suddenly forgets all about them. The people of the time were startled by this and wondered whether they (his pictures) should not be regarded as works by a god. Is not this what is meant by the above saying?

"Hsien-hsi was a graduate from Chi-hsia in Shantung, and all through his life he loved its woods and streams, rocks and cliffs, hidden ravines and piled up mountain ranges, its green and luxuriant valleys and steep and dangerous precipices. This love accumulated and changed him profoundly. He would drop into meditation without saying a word and forget everything around him. The innumerable and extraordinary things stored in his bosom could then no longer be restrained or hidden, and when he suddenly perceived a mass of mountains rising in tiers, they came out (the accumulated impressions showed themselves). Luminous mist, clearing skies and vapours emerged above and below in great

abundance and could no longer be kept back. The moving things (transmutations) of his heart found an outlet and were expressed in paintings. Clouds and vapours, wind, rain and thunder appeared as by a miraculous process. At such moments he would suddenly forget his limbs and body and see nothing else of the phenomena of Nature than mountains. In this he went to the utmost limit.

"People of later generations have tried to reach him through his paintings, but they have not understood that painting was to him forgetting (immersion). They claim that his brush-work opens a path that they can follow and that his art can be reached by formal design. But such people have not a single hill or a single valley in their bosoms. They are just gazing at the ocean.² If they pretend that they have grasped him, how could they be real painters?"

Tung Yu's words may be poetically coloured but they offer some hints about the painter's way of working and his sources of inspiration which can serve to broaden our understanding of Li Ch'êng's highly intuitional and romantic art. It was apparently based on impressions of the monumental landscapes which he had gathered in his youth among the mountains and valleys of Shantung and further developed by a creative imagination that was nourished by his meditative practices. By this it acquired a meaning that was not to be grasped simply by careful imitations or formal analysis. The painters who followed in his footsteps were thus not able to transmit the essentials of his art even though they learned from him certain characteristic elements of style and teachings. It may thus be said that though Li Ch'êng exercised a far-reaching influence on later generations of landscape-painters, none of them reached the level of his art or creative imagination.

One of the most famous among Li Ch'êng's early followers was Yen Su, usually called Yen Ling-t'u,

¹ *Kuang-ch'uan hui-p'o*, vol. IV, p. 91.

² Reference to *Chuang-tzu*, signifying the vain efforts to grasp immensity.

because he served in the imperial library in the Lung-t'u pavilion in the reign of the emperor Chên-tsung (998-1023).¹ He held prominent official positions and rose to the presidency of the Board of Rites, which has secured him a place in the dynastic history, but his popular fame was mainly due to his skill as a maker of mechanical instruments, such as a water-clock and a "south-pointing carriage". He died in 1080.

As a painter he is said to have followed Wang Wei and Li Ch'êng and specialized in the representation of wintry forests and the like. To what extent these actually corresponded to Li Ch'êng's renderings of similar motifs, is more than we can tell, but if we may rely on the observations expressed by Tung Yu in his colophon on Yen Su's picture *Sketches from Shu*, his landscapes were based on exceptionally close and careful studies of nature. He wrote as follows:²

"Landscape-painting is a matter of composition. The far and the near, width and narrowness (*i.e.* the spatial composition) depend on the natural gifts (ability) of the painter. He collects many views in order to transmit them into paintings, but it must all be done so naturally that they do not lose the air of life and that no tracks or traces of the brush-work can be seen. In that way the pictures become wonderful. It was formerly said of (common) pictures that they had no real mountains or living water.

"Yen Su amused himself with painting, and his landscapes seemed more wonderful than the real forms of nature. He never worked in a careless way. He climbed mountains and made a careful study of them (what he was going to paint). Whenever he met with an inspiring motif of hills and valleys he immediately did a picture of it. It was only after he had found the ideas good that he transmitted them into paintings. He would express himself only in such forms and shapes as he had observed (in nature) and did not insert any of his own speculations. He said himself that he was transmitting actual scenery and (that) everything was included in it. All through his

life he did pictures only of such things as he had seen. But his contemporaries did not understand this, or if they did, they could not understand the reasons for it (his way of working)."

The fact that Yen Su's close adherence to actual scenery was considered a remarkable and extraordinary feature tends to show that the prevailing mode of landscape-painting was of a less naturalistic kind. His attitude in art as well as in other matters was evidently more "scientific" in a modern sense, based on observation and experience rather than on creative imagination, but whether this made his pictures look different from those of Li Ch'êng and other contemporaries, is a question open to doubt.

* * *

The most important representative of the grand tradition of landscape-painting after Li Ch'êng was, however, Fan K'uan. He was also a northerner, born in Hua-yüan in Shensi, probably about the middle of the tenth century and "still alive" in 1026. His real name was Fan Chung-chêng, but he received the appellation K'uan (Broad) because of his generous and broad-minded disposition. Very little is told about his *curriculum vitae*, since he passed no examinations and served in no official position, but many interesting traditions are reported by Chinese chroniclers regarding his artistic activity, his temperament and mode of life. As these traditions form a natural background for a better understanding of his art, some of them should here be recorded.

Kuo Jo-hsü, who wrote his notes on the painters of former generations less than fifty years after the death of Fan K'uan, characterizes him as follows:³ "He was a skilful landscape-painter who penetrated

¹ The painter is shortly characterized by Kuo Jo-hsü and Mi Fei and his biography is given in *Hsüan-ho hua-p'u* and in the Sung history. His mechanical inventions are discussed by Giles in *Adventures in Sincia* (1914) and by A. C. Moule in an article called "The Chinese South-pointing Carriage" in *T'oung Pao*, 1924, *Cf. Soper, op. cit.*, notes 409-411.

² *Kuang-ch'uan hua-p'u*, vol. V, p. 81.

³ *T'ao-liao chüan -süfu chih*, vol. IV, (Landscape-painters.)

to spiritual comprehension through his reason and with his extraordinary gifts surpassed all others. His style was quite distinct from that of Kuan T'ung and Li Ch'êng and his rules (methods) were different from theirs. His manners and appearance were stern and old-fashioned, his behaviour severe and rustic. He had a great love for wine and was devoted to Tao(ism). He used to roam between Yung and Loyang and was still alive in the T'ien-shêng era (1023-1032). There are some old men who remember a great deal about him.

"Among pictures by him which have been transmitted are one representing Braving Snow on High Peaks, some landscapes of the four seasons, and figure paintings with historical subjects."

The essential points regarding his stern nature and independence as a painter mentioned by Kuo Jo-hsü are further elaborated in the introductory notes about the painter in the catalogue of the Hsüan-ho collection, where Fan K'uan was represented with fifty-eight pictures (of which nineteen are mentioned by their titles).¹ His personality is characterized with the same expressions as are used by Kuo Jo-hsü, whereas his development as a painter is described as follows:

"A highly skilled landscape-painter, he started by studying Li Ch'êng's paintings, but then he woke up and said to himself with a sigh: 'Does not the method of my predecessor include learning direct from things? I will rather take the things themselves as my teachers than a man, but a still better teacher than material objects is the heart.' Thereupon he abandoned his old method of study and went to live at T'ai-hua in the Chung-nan mountains. There he lived among the crags and coves and wooded hills, studying clouds and mist and the changing effects of wind and moon, darkening and clearing skies - views which are difficult to render in forms. But he met them (embraced them) with his soul and expressed them with (the point of) the brush. And such were his thousand cliffs and ten thousand gorges that they instantly made one feel as if walking along a path in the shade of

mountains and, however great the heat, one shivered with cold and wished for a covering. Therefore it was commonly said that K'uan was able to transmit the spirit of the mountains. He was in fact an equal of Kuan T'ung and Li Ch'êng."

The same traditions are reported by Liu Tao-ch'un in *Shêng-ch'ao ming-hua p'ing*, though with some additions and picturesque variations. He tells how this rustic man spent his time in solitary ramblings in the woods and sometimes sat "the whole day on a mountain, looking all around for interesting motifs. Even when there was snow and the moon was shining, he walked to and fro, closely observing (everything) that could give him inspiration. He studied the art of Li Ch'êng, but though he acquired a wonderful refinement, he still remained inferior to Li. Then he began to place himself in front of the scenery and to express his thoughts without any display of ornamentation. He drew the very bones of the mountains, and developed a style of his own which was firm and noble and not in the least dependent on that of his predecessor. From that time on he was equal to Li Ch'êng.

"Among the landscape-painters who have appeared since the Sung dynasty came into power, Chung-chêng and (Li) Ch'êng are the only ones who may be called supreme; no one up to the present day has reached them. In characterizing them people of the time said that when looking at things which are nearby in Li Ch'êng's pictures, they seemed to be a thousand *li* away, whereas things far away in Fan K'uan's pictures did not seem at a great distance. Both may be said to have created divine things; but Chung-chêng liked to paint motifs such as 'to brave the snow' and 'to come out of the clouds' (?) and such pictures of his possess much life-breath and structure."

According to the above description of Fan K'uan's artistic activity, which Liu Tao-ch'un probably had compiled from various contemporary sources, the master was to be placed on a level with Li Ch'êng, the merits of the two men being equally

¹ *Hsüan-ho hua-p'u*, vol. 11.

great. But in the few lines in which he sums up current opinions and expresses his own estimate of the painter, he places Fan K'uan above Li Ch'êng, to wit: "According to critics, Fan K'uan became well known as a landscape-painter and earned as such great fame. His were true rocks, and old trees rose right up under his brush. If one seeks for the resonance of his life-breath (one will find that) it surpasses all appearances. He did not rely on adornments and took no guidance from the ancients but formed his own ideas, working like the Creator. Yet his trees have too shallow roots and there are too many steep cliffs beyond the plains. But these are small faults, they do not spoil the noble quality of his works. Therefore he should be placed in the divine (i.e. the highest) class."

Mi Fei, the most discriminating and outspoken of all the critics at the beginning of the twelfth century, places Fan K'uan definitely at the head of all the landscape-painters of the period. He mentions the painter several times in *Hua Shih* and gives a closer characterization of his style than any other critic. The following extracts may serve as examples: "Fan K'uan's landscapes have high and sharply-cut mountains like Hêng-shan and T'ai-shan. Their far-away peaks are usually facing us, point blank; they are steep and abrupt. In his later years he used ink too freely and made no distinction between rocks and ground. There has been no man in the present dynasty who has equalled him. The streams in his pictures issue from invisible depths, and the water seems to make sound. His snow-covered mountains are all painted according to the so-called Wang Wei models."

In another entry Mi Fei draws the following parallel between Li Ch'êng and Fan K'uan, briefly indicating their respective manners of painting: "Li Ch'êng did his pictures with light ink as in the midst of a dream. The rocks in them are like moving clouds; they are done with great skill, but they are not quite real (not quite convincing). Fan K'uan's pictures produce effects of heroic boldness, but they are dark as the night when the moon is waning.

There is no distinction between rocks and ground. The mysterious nobility of the things (he did) make him certainly rank above Li Ch'êng."

Mi Fei has also dwelt in particular on the development of Fan K'uan's style, which, according to him, was based on the study of Ching Hao; Fan K'uan's early works were stylistically closely related to those of the older master, though done in a different technique. To quote: "I saw in the possession of a priest in Tan-t'u a (vertical) landscape scroll which was much like Ching Hao's work, though painted with a 'dry' and 'not round' brush. At the side of the waterfall in this picture was the inscription 'Fan K'uan of Hua-yüan'. This must have been a work of his early years (because) if we compare it with (pictures in) his usual manner in which the mountains are lined at the top with dense forests, he appears here more dry and severe and the bold and big stones by the water show more strength and firmness. He really was a pupil of Ching Hao. Therefore I got it in exchange for another picture to show it to the critics. The paintings by Ching Hao which I saw in the possession of Pi Chung-yü and in the house of Tuan Chien did not impress me as extraordinary. Fan K'uan certainly surpassed his master 'as blue surpasses indigo'. Li Ch'êng was also a follower of Ching Hao, but I never saw a single brush-stroke of his which was like Ching Hao's, whereas he painted trees and leaves quite like those by Kuan T'ung."

If we may draw some conclusions from the above observations by Mi Fei and also from Su Tung-p'o's remark that "Fan K'uan was the only one (among the landscape-painters of Sung) who preserved something of the old style, though he had just a little of the vulgar spirit",¹ he belonged to the same set of nature-philosophers as the old hermit who meets the young painter in Ching Hao's Discourse (quoted in a previous chapter). In other words, he remained all through his life a very exclusive Taoist whose creative genius was nurtured by constant communion with Nature. He was no less absorbed

¹ Cf. Su Tung-p'o's *li p'u* to a landscape by Han-chieh.

in the contemplation of the life of forests and hills, streams and clouds than the full-fledged poet-painters of a later generation, and more untrammelled by material considerations of workmanship and technique than most of the later men – truly a painter by the grace of God, to whom creative work with the brush was irresistible.

If we try to find a reason for this high estimate of Fan K'uan as a landscape-painter in the pictures which nowadays are ascribed to the master, we are bound to experience some disappointment, for only very few – if any – of them can be accepted as originals. Yet, in spite of their uneven quality and varying age, they represent a fairly homogeneous style and certain technical features which are recognizable also in good imitations (Pls. 153–156).

The Palace Museum collection contains several large mountain landscapes, ascribed to Fan K'uan; five of them have been reproduced in *Ku-kung shu-hua chi*. Most important of these pictures is the grand composition called Travellers among Mountains and Streams, which has an inscription by Tung Ch'i-ch'ang, attributing it to Fan K'uan, but no signature.¹ It is a picture of magnificent structure and impressive dimensions. The travellers at the very bottom of the picture are as small as pin-heads in proportion to the huge mountain cone which reaches almost to the upper edge of the picture. Far beneath, separated from the dominating mountain by a light mist, is a wooded terrace and still further down there are a mountain stream and a winding road, where some men and donkeys are descending to the water. The composition may thus be said to consist of various tiers or successive terraces, and as the wooded terraces at the top of the very high mountain are represented as seen from above and the figures in the valley are infinitesimal, it gives the impression of being painted from some imaginary height. The whole thing is one of those grand views projected from the creative consciousness of an artist, and conceived in the time-honoured style with the same angle of vision maintained throughout. The forms seem almost to

be bulging out of the picture plane, an impression which is emphasized by the many deep folds or crevices. The actual modelling of the forms (convexities and concavities) is accomplished by means of innumerable short strokes or jets sometimes likened to raindrops or to sesame seeds by the Chinese historians. Western critics perhaps may find in this technical method some points of similarity to the so-called pointillism of the French neo-impressionists (Pl. 154).

This rather peculiar method by which the play of light and shade is effectively increased may have existed so to speak *in nuce* before Fan K'uan, but he was the first to develop it systematically on a large scale in landscape-painting. The innovation was important from a pictorial point of view, it enlarged the limits of pictorial expression, and gave the first impulse to the so-called *ts'a ts'un*, the rubbed or squeezed wrinkles and folds which were further developed by Li T'ang and Hsia Kuei and their followers. We shall have occasion in the following to observe this method in its later developments; at this place we must limit our notes to Fan K'uan's paintings.

The picture in the Palace Museum representing A Temple in Snow-covered Mountains has always been considered one of Fan K'uan's great masterpieces.² An Lu-ts'un may have had this picture (or a similar one) in mind when he wrote: "The brushwork is rich and luminous, the design grand and heroic. The dry trees on the top of the high mountains are all distinct. The rocks are painted with wrinkles like raindrops . . . Every part is true to nature" (Pl. 156). The compositional arrangement is dominated by two diagonals indicated by the mountain slopes, the one in front of the other, and these are split into series of angular rocks separated by deep crevices. The contrast between the light and the dark tones makes these snow-covered rocks stand out in strong relief; their shadings and inequalities being indicated with dots and jets. The bare trees

¹ *Ku-kung shu-hua chi*, vol. IX, Size: 6' 5" × 3' 3".

² *Ku-kung shu-hua chi*, vol. IX, Size: 3' 6" × 1' 3".

form an intricate pattern on the white ground and the temple buildings may be perceived far away in the bottom of the gully; every detail is clearly stated, yet subject to the structural pattern which is, so to speak, the very backbone of the picture.

A somewhat similar design may be observed in the large winter-landscape in Boston which, however, is lacking in the structural quality of the preceding picture owing to the rather excessive crowding with details, the softer brush-work, and the darkening of the general tone by age and wear. The picture is now difficult to appreciate since the innumerable details have sunk into the silk and become blurred, but even with due regard to its faulty state of preservation, it cannot be denied that the grand design has been weakened by the massing of the "wrinkles" and trees. It seems as if the man who painted it had been trying to excel Fan K'uan in intricacy and richness of detail.

The fan-shaped picture in the Boston Museum called *A Temple among Snowy Hills* is more convincing as an original work by Fan K'uan. According to the seals the picture was at one time in the collections of the Yüan emperor Wên (1330-1332) and Tü Hsiang Yüan-pien (1325-1390). In spite of its small size it opens out a wide view over snow-covered fields and a mountain ridge fading away into grey mist. Only a somewhat curved hump at the right side of the picture rises out of the mist, serving as a background to some dark and sturdy trees and a temple pavilion further away. The composition may be called unilateral; it is concentrated in the mountain hump and the trees on the right side (Pl. 157); the rest of the picture is empty space, snow without a track, where the little man under a big hat seems to have lost his way.

An interesting picture which ever since the Sung period has been considered an original by Fan K'uan is the handscroll in the Saito collection which, however, is so badly damaged that only fragments of it remain intact. It represents a long river-view in autumn mood, a temple in wooded mountains, and it is accompanied by a colophon by

Mi Yu-jên and a poem by Kao Shih-ch'i. The sharply accentuated mountain folds are here partly rendered with a squeezed brush. The same is also true of the large landscape in the Palace Museum representing *A Waterfall among Leafy Trees in Autumn*.¹ The general design of it, dominated by a somewhat curving mountain-peak, may be said to support the traditional attribution, but the brush-work bespeaks a later origin (cf. Pl. 248).

It is not made up of those short strokes and jets on a toned ground which we have observed in the preceding pictures, but developed into a kind of modelling by means of horizontal and vertical (or diagonal) broad strokes of a stiff or squeezed brush. The sharp and angular shapes of the rock-formations are strongly accentuated; they seem to be cut or split with a broad axe. This technical method, which is known as *ts'u pi* (rubbed or squeezed brush), was developed in particular by Li T'ang and his followers in the South Sung Academy in Hangchow. Judging by the brush-work, the picture may indeed be attributed to Li T'ang, but it must at the same time be admitted that the design is of the type that was introduced by Fan K'uan. In other words, it illustrates Fan K'uan's importance for the subsequent development of landscape-painting and forms a link between two epochs.

According to the old critics Fan K'uan was a man of extraordinary gifts; his creative energy was overflowing and his thirst for the wells of inspiration hidden in the mountains and streams insatiable. This is emphasized over and over again by the best informed writers of Sung times, who had better opportunities than we to study the painter's original works and to learn something about him from men who may have met the impressive master. One of these critics was Tung Yu, the eulhuistic writer of the Hsüan Ho epoch. When in one of his somewhat stilted colophons he was seeking to describe Fan

¹ Reproduced in *K'ok shu-hua chi*, vol. XII. Size, 3' 6" x 3' 1". Since the actual manner of execution in this picture points to Li T'ang rather than to Fan K'uan, it is reproduced in the chapter devoted to the younger master.

K'uan's inordinate lust for landscape-painting, he chose as a simile the story about the king of Ch'i who refused to eat anything but cock's feet in spite of the fact that he could never get enough of them to appease his hunger. Fan K'uan felt, *mutatis mutandis*, a corresponding hunger or need to nourish his creative imagination with landscapes.¹ "Whatever he grasped in his heart had to find outlet in paintings . . . He could render wide expanses quite completely even in small pictures. The life-breath in them was overflowing, and they were no longer just pictures of mountains. How could those who keep the ink in their mouth and lick their brushes while they are hurriedly and humbly executing someone's orders, understand his way of working and follow him?"

"Worldly people do not know real mountains and when they try to paint them they simply pile up rocks and earth to make a show. How could they know that one whose heart has been set free by passing through the Creator's melting-pot, grasps things as soon as he confronts them? He is the real painter. Lu-kuo wên-kung² once said that Fan K'uan is the one who represents life in landscape-painting. That is true to me."

The reference to Chuang-tzû's words about the Creator's melting-pot is significant; it places Fan K'uan among the chosen few who had been tried and found strong enough to pass through the transmutation. "The universe is the melting-pot and God is the caster", writes Chuang-tzû, and adds: "I shall go whithersoever I am sent, to wake unconscious of the past, as a man wakes from a dreamless sleep".³ Whatever the textual meaning of these words may be, they certainly give a hint of the Taoist aim to transcend the narrow limits of the personal mind and desires in order to enter into the sphere of a larger consciousness, a universal mind, by which one may penetrate and grasp the significance of the innumerable phenomena of the natural world.

Fan K'uan had acquired this faculty in no less degree than Li Ch'êng. The two masters had much in common in their approach to nature and art; they held so to speak corresponding positions as pro-

tagonists of heroic landscape painting, but they had very little in common as individual temperaments and followed different methods as painters. This has given cause to characterizations of the two masters as opposites as well as parallels. One of the earliest writers who expressed such views was Han Cho (of the early twelfth century), who tells how he learned them from Wang Chin-ch'ing, the famous collector and imperial kinsman in Hui-tsung's reign:⁴

"One day Wang Chin-ch'ing hung on the east wall of his library a painting by Li Ch'êng and on the west wall another by Fan K'uan. He looked first at the work by Li Ch'êng and said: 'In master Li's manner of painting the ink is smooth (i.e. applied in washes) and the brush-work is refined. The mist and vapours are light and moving. It is as if one were looking over a thousand li, and the beautiful spirit is so abundant that one might grasp it with the hand.'

"Then he looked at the work of Fan K'uan and said: 'It is as if the mighty peaks and mountain ranges were standing before one's eye in all their grandeur. The life-breath is vigorous and bold, the brush-work forceful and mature. Truly, the works of these two masters possess respectively the virtues of civil and martial culture.'

"I have pondered on his words and would say that his discerning eye penetrated bone and marrow."

Li Ch'êng and Fan K'uan were both northerners, the former came from Shantung, the latter from Shansi. They loved the rather austere nature of their home provinces, the rugged mountains and the deep gorges with splashing torrents, and the wide stretches of open table-land with no verdure but magnificent old trees writhing their roots and branches like coiling dragons, bleak views in autumn mood, or in the dim light of winter, when mist is rising from the snow in gullies. There was little room in their art for the softer moods and

¹ *Kuang-ch'uan hua-po*, vol. VI, p. 92.

² Wên Yen-po (1006-1097), prominent statesman and writer, See Giles, *Biogr. Dict.*, 2309.

³ Giles, *Chuang Tzû*, second edit. (1926), p. 82.

⁴ Cf. *Shan-shui ch'ui-ch'üan chi*, chapter on "How to Criticize Pictures".

mellower aspects of nature, the budding freshness of spring, or sunset over distant hills on a summer eve, or the quiet air over rivers where fishermen were drawing in their nets. Such motifs were not familiar to the painters from the north; they were cultivated by the men who lived further south in the provinces of lakes and rivers, of rice fields and bamboo groves, and whose pictorial imagination was nurtured by impressions quite different from those of the north.

* * *

Hsü Tao-ning may have been a genius by nature, but it was only later in life that he reached fame as a painter. According to certain records, he came from Ho-chien in Chihli (Hopei), though he is usually classified as a man from Ch'ang-an, where he probably spent a large part of his life. It is told of him (as about the Tartar painter Kao I) that he started as a pharmacist, and used to hand over small pictures of trees or stones to his clients together with the medicine that he sold them. Thus he became known as a painter, and as his fame increased, he was employed by many noblemen and officials, such as Chang Shih-hsün, a minister under the emperor Chên-tsung (998-1022), who ordered Hsü Tao-ning to execute some paintings on the walls and screens in his house. These pictures pleased the minister so much that he composed a poem in praise of the artist, in which he said: "Li Ch'êng has passed away, Fan K'uan is dead, now there is only Hsü Tao-ning from Ch'ang-an".

He followed, to begin with, rather closely in the footsteps of Li Ch'êng, painting in a somewhat minute and cautious manner, but with the years his brush-work became simpler and bolder, thus expressing his strong temperament more spontaneously. He painted distant views with bare trees, steep mountain ranges and wintry forests, all in a style of his own.

The above information, which is reported partly by Kuo Jo-hsi and partly in *Hsüan-ho hua-p'u*, vol. 2 and *Shu-hua p'u*, vol. 50, indicates fairly well the general direction and characteristics of Hsü Tao-

ning's art and the high esteem in which he was held at the time, but it should also be noted that Mi Fei strikes a disparaging note in his *Hua Shih* with the following words: "Hsü Tao-ning cannot be used as a model; both the man and his paintings are quite vulgar".

Mi Fei's criticism may, however, in this as in some other cases be caused more by his spirit of contradiction than by a thorough study of the painter's production. It must at least be admitted that the pictures which still with some reason pass under his name are anything but vulgar. On the contrary, they are on a level with the best of contemporary landscapes and may be said to substantiate by their somewhat dry but firm and forceful manner of execution, the above-quoted characterization of his individual style as based on Li Ch'êng.

I am thinking in particular of two handscrolls ascribed to the master, one in the Nelson Gallery in Kansas City, the other in the Fujii collection in Kyôto. In addition to these, two of the large pictures in the Palace Museum collection should be remembered, though known to me only in relatively poor reproductions.¹ All these represent bleak and desolate landscapes, sandy plains and sharply silhouetted rocks with a few dry trees of the same gnarled type as is sometimes seen in the pictures by Li Ch'êng. An Lu-ts'un offers the following description of a characteristic painting by Hsü Tao-ning called *Autumn Peaks in Mist*:²

"The vapours hang like a screen. The trees have no wrinkles, their branches (twigs) look like birds' claws. The foliage is laid on with large dots according to the *p'o mo* method. The curving shapes of the mountains and rocks and their wrinkles are painted on with burnt (dry) ink. The trees on the mountain tops are likewise painted with burnt ink; their branches, whether small or large, are all indicated. They are straight as pillars and really extraordinary. In the valley below there is a man walking along with his donkey.

¹ *K.-k. shu-hua chi*, vol. XXIX and *Ki-kung*, vol. XII,

² *Mo-yuan hua-kuan*, vol. 4.

"The artist did not aim at formal likeness, but he obtained a divine effect. The painting must have been a section of a screen of which this alone is preserved. The brush-work is startling and powerful; the silk well preserved."

The pictures in the Palace Museum collection correspond in part to this description, they contain the hanging mist, the high mountains and tall trees, whereas the scrolls mentioned above, which are both sections of longer compositions, contain varied elements of pictorial beauty. The design of the scroll in the Nelson Gallery is the most original. It represents a broad river valley with a number of fishing-boats. The water flows peacefully between high mountain walls which form a succession of sharply cut and silhouetted screens on both sides. Clumps of trees are scattered at the foot of the mountains, along the shore, while others (of minute dimensions) border the ridges like stiff and tattered fringes. The incessantly curving lines, accentuated by folds and wrinkles, which follow the rising and falling slopes and move over valleys and peaks, create an impression of gigantic waves; a vision of primordial ages when the crust of the earth was still in formation. The sweeping grandeur of the design is emphasized by the austere nakedness of the forms and the ruggedness of the trees, which seem to be ravaged by storm and dearth. The men in the fishing-boats indicate the nearness of the actual human world, but they appear very ephemeral in comparison with these forms of primeval nature (PL158).

Although the picture is only a section out of a longer scroll, it is perfectly balanced in design and possesses a peculiar rustic grandeur that makes it one

of the most remarkable examples of the earliest phase of romantic landscape-painting in China that has come to our knowledge. If it actually is the work of Hsü Tao-ming, as claimed by the traditional attribution, it shows him as a very eminent and accomplished master.

The other scroll, formerly in the Tuan Fang and now in the Fujii collection in Kyōto, is likewise a river view with a low shore line in the foreground and a *lointain* of mountain ridges, but these are by no means as sharply cut and precipitous as in the preceding example; the outlines are undulating and their forms are to no small extent enveloped in a soft haze. Gnarled old trees, growing quite sparsely, form the dominating element of the design. They wrench their trunks and branches as if they were grappling with the opposing forces of cold winds and heartless soil, reminding us of the trees in Li Ch'êng's pictures, but they are further developed as expressionistic symbols. They impart a meaning, if not a dramatic significance, to the otherwise somewhat shadowy picture (PL159).

One of the large pictures in the Palace Museum also represents some old trees of the same type. There are three of them; they grow from fissures in the rocks and reach the upper edge of the picture; filling out the whole space with their twisting and turning branches, which end in sharply pointed claw-like twigs. Neither Li Ch'êng nor Kuo Hsi, nor any of the Yüan masters who painted trees of the same kind, surpassed the forceful incisiveness of Hsü Tao-ming's gnarled pines. He was a great draughtsman and a wonderful interpreter of the soul-life of trees.

II

The Southerners: Tung Yüan, Chü-jan and Yen Wên-kuei

FOREMOST AMONG the Southern representatives of the monochrome landscape-painting at the end of the tenth century were Tung Yüan and Chü-jan.

They have always been mentioned as the protagonists of the so-called "Southern School", which, however, in later times became equivalent to a

stylistic designation that included a host of monochrome landscape-painters from various parts of the country without any distinction in regard to their motifs or places of activity.

Tung Yüan, whose *tzü* was Shu-ta and whose *hao* or most common appellation was Pei-yüan, was practically a contemporary of Li Ch'êng. His activity belonged to the latter half of the tenth century. He lived mostly in Nanking, where he served as an assistant director of the imperial parks under the South T'ang dynasty (937-975). No landscape painter in China has been more unanimously praised and more constantly imitated by his countrymen than Tung Yüan, particularly since the sixteenth century, when Tung Ch'ü-ch'ang with never ceasing enthusiasm proclaimed him as the greatest master of "the Southern School".

The biographical information about the painter is very scanty, but critics of various ages have given interesting descriptions of his art. One of the earliest is by Shên Kua (1030-1093), who wrote as follows in *Mêng-ch'i pi-t'an*:¹ "The principal master in Chiang-nan at the time was Pei-yüan (named Tung Yüan) an excellent painter particularly skilled in painting the mists of autumn and far open views. He represented the real mountains of Chiang-nan and did not make any extraordinary cliffs. After him followed the Buddhist priest Chü-jan, who handed down Yüan's manner; both reached the utmost degree of excellence. Most of Yüan's as well as Chü-jan's pictures were meant to be seen at a distance, because their brush-work was very rough. Seen at a close view the objects in their pictures do not seem right, but when one looks at them from a distance, the scenery and all the objects stand out clearly and beautifully, arousing deep feelings and carrying the thoughts far away, as if one were gazing upon some strange land. Such is, for instance, Yüan's Sunset picture: If one looks at it nearby, it does not seem remarkable, but looking at it from a distance one can see a village appearing vaguely far away in the obscure depth of the picture in the evening light, while the peaks of the distant cliffs

seem to reflect the colour (of the sun setting) over the place."

This description strikes the fundamental note, one which is repeated and varied by later authors, who emphasize Tung Yüan's faculty for transforming the Chiang-nan landscapes into pictures which were essentially true to nature and at the same time "stimulating to poets".

According to *Hsüan-ho lun-p'u*, Tung Yüan, however, painted not only landscapes but also "water-dragons, and although it is impossible to tell through observation whether their forms are right or wrong, they crawl up and down as if they were emerging from hibernation in crevices and caves; and whether they are playing with the pearl or singing to the moon, their shapes are expressive of their joy and anger and they arouse far-reaching thoughts in the minds of the beholder . . .

"Generally Yüan's landscapes are executed with a bold and strong brush, their mountain-slopes are steep and lofty, while the peaks form double rows, suggesting the same strength as his dragon-paintings. He also did a picture of Chung K'uei which seems still more suggestive. But the painters praised him in particular for his coloured landscapes, which were rich and luxuriant, approaching the manner of Li Ssü-hsün . . . There were not many painters at the time able to paint landscapes in colour, and those who could imitate Li Ssü-hsün were few. Consequently he became famous in this respect. From this time on he expressed his own mind and feelings in (ink) paintings of rivers and lakes, wind and rain, streams and valleys, hills and peaks, some dark, some clear, forests and snow, mists and clouds together with a thousand cliffs and ten thousand gullies and broad rivers winding between high banks; in them the beholders could grasp the real things as if they were looking at the actual scenes. They were enough to inspire the poets; their significance was beyond descriptions in words."

T'ang Hou, who wrote his *Hua Chien* at the beginning of the fourteenth century, expressed the

¹ Quoted in *Ch'ing-ho shu-hua fang*, vol. VI, 137.

same trend of thought in a more systematic way as follows: "There are two kinds of landscapes by Tung Yüan; in the one kind, the peaks are like lumps of alum and painted with diluted ink. (In these pictures) there are also groves and distant trees or far-reaching scenery, mysterious and deep. The mountains and rocks are painted with hemp fibre wrinkles. The landscapes of the other kind are executed in colour, and in them the wrinkles are few. The colours are strong and old-fashioned, the garments of the human figures red and blue, but for the plain (white) clothes he used chalk. There are beautiful examples of both kinds."

The coloured landscapes ascribed to Tung Yüan impress us as more traditional and old-fashioned than the monochromes, and these successive stages in the painter's style may also be implied in T'ang Hou's statement that Tung Yüan "in his early days painted peaks like lumps of alum, but when he grew older, he washed away such early habits". The majority of the pictures which nowadays pass under the name of the master are, however, of the monochrome class, and these have been most frequently imitated in later times, whereas the coloured ones, which have a more traditional decorative character, and consequently may be called more academic, attracted less attention from the later protagonists of the "Southern School".

Two good examples of this latter (coloured) type of landscapes form part of the Palace Museum collection.¹ They are both remarkable for their grand designs and a wealth of carefully executed details accentuated in colour. According to Tung Ch'i-ch'ang, Wang To and later connoisseurs who have provided them with inscriptions, the pictures are important original works by Tung Yüan, but the weight of these testimonies is considerably reduced by the fact that practically all pictures of some importance ascribed to the master are provided with encomiums signed Tung Ch'i-ch'ang. His often misused authority has caused more confusion in regard to Tung Yüan than the endeavours of all other imitators.

The more old-fashioned of the two above-mentioned pictures, known as *Lung-su chiao-min t'u* (a title referring to a festival for evocation of rain),² which measures five feet square, represents a broad river winding along undulating grassy hills from which spits of land project into the stream. The eye follows the winding river reaching a shoreless vista over distant waters (Pl. 160). The view is wide and open, as may be seen in the reproduction, but its original effect is considerably impaired by the present condition of the picture; it has darkened with age and may also have been subject to re-touching. It is not the kind of picture that we would confidently ascribe to a great master of the tenth century, but it is generally accepted as a famous work by Tung Yüan, and confirmed as such by Tung Ch'i-ch'ang and the Emperor Ch'ien-lung who both express their admiration for the master, in lengthy inscriptions.

In the other Tung Yüan landscape in the same collection, the colouring is less prominent (Pl. 161). It is called *Pavilions on the Mountains of the Immortals*, and has an inscription by Wang To, a younger contemporary of Tung Ch'i-ch'ang. The buildings are, however, practically hidden in the thick mist that fills the gorge between the deeply folded and overgrown mountain slopes, while the rivulets and streams form cascades and empty themselves into a broad torrent which is spanned by a bridge. The men who pass here are too small to attract attention, but they are useful indications of the relative sizes of the various elements, such as the tall pine-trees and the overwhelming mountains, which in spite of their size look more like soft hills than like mountains of hard and solid rock. They have no sharp-cut silhouettes, but are modelled by soft shadows and long "hemp-fibre wrinkles" (*pi-ma*

¹ *K-k, shu-hua chi*, vols. I and II.

² This picture which was included in the London exhibition of 1935-1936, is described in the catalogue as follows: "1126. Tung Yüan, Festival in Honor of the Emperor. Painting in colour on silk. 156/160 cm. No signature but the attribution seems justified." The description is correct in so far as the emperor seems to be arriving in a boat, while the people on the shore are dancing.

ts'un)". This type of humpy or hilly mountains can be seen in many of the so-called Tung Yüan paintings, but they were also successfully imitated by some of the great landscape-painters of the Yüan period such as Kao K'ö-kung and Wu Chên, not to mention later imitators like Tung Ch'ü-ch'ang or the Four Wangs. If the highly-developed pictorial effect may be taken as a standard for dating, it might well be placed in the Yüan period, but the design as such is characterized by a lofty grandeur worthy of a great master.

A third picture, executed mainly in colour and attributed to Tung Yüan by several modern authorities, was until recently in the Chang Ta-ch'ien collection. The composition is again dominated by a mountain rising above a broad winding river and clumps of trees in the foreground. The mountain is greenish blue, the trees and buildings darker in tone, while the small figures who travel on the road are painted in lighter hues, and white cloudlets circle in the gorges. The colour scheme makes us recall Li Ssu-hsün mode of colouring, but it is applied to a version of a typical Tung Yüan design with more skill than penetration.

The monochrome ink-paintings ascribed to Tung Yüan are more common in Japanese collections, but only one of those which I have seen could be seriously accepted as an original by the master,¹ even though several are provided with titles written in the manner of the Emperor Hui-tsung and in some cases with colophons by Tung Ch'ü-ch'ang. They are more or less typical examples of the Southern School painted with broad and stumpy brushes and rich ink in the manner which in the Ming period was considered characteristic of Tung Yüan and his followers. Pictures of this type often appear to advantage in reproductions, as may be seen in half a dozen plates of the well-known Japanese publication *Nanshu Ihatsu* (vols. I and V).

The handscroll in the Saitō collection is a more important picture. It is highly praised in the colophons by Tung Ch'ü-ch'ang and Ch'ên Chi-ju and has been repeatedly reproduced by modern critics as an original by the master. This may to some extent

be justified by the style of the picture, but judging by the reproduction in the Saitō catalogue, the brush-work is lacking in structure (PL.162). The deeply folded wavy mountains along the winding river are enveloped in a moisty haze recalling a late winter day when the snow is melting. The river is visible only at the beginning and the very end of the scroll; the long middle section is occupied by tiers of mountain ridges in forms that rise and fall like surf or gigantic breakers, sometimes forced back or flattened into whorls, sometimes lifting their heads too high for the picture and thus cut off by the upper edge. The continuous movement of the shapes is further emphasized by the undulating rhythm of the brush-work and its effective play of light and shade. The various grades of light and dark ink are skilfully combined into a play of tones which suggest an atmosphere loaded with the moisture of melting snow.²

None of the afore-mentioned pictures is comparable in quality to the fragments of two large handscrolls preserved in the Hui-hua kuan in Peking and the Shanghai Museum respectively. They are so much alike that they may be taken as sections of the same scroll, but the conclusion may not be correct. (It is difficult to decide without photographs of both pictures.) Both may be said to correspond to the title *Hsiao-hsiang t'u*, mentioned among the works of Tung Yüan; they represent wide river-views with people travelling in boats or waiting for the ferry and fishermen drawing their nets. The compositions have a sweeping grandeur, but they are rendered with a sensitive brush that has transformed the wide views into visions of evening quietude (Pls.163-166).

Almost half of the space is open water; it fills the whole foreground and stretches beyond some promontories on the one side towards a horizon where

¹ I am thinking of the large winter landscape now in the Kurokawa collection in Ashiya.

² A somewhat similar scroll composition representing a river scene with snow-covered rocks and trees was shown to me a few years ago in the J. D. Chên collection in Hongkong. It was clearly of a later date.

no shore is visible and the water merges with the sky. At the other end of the picture, the further shore is brought closer to the beholder; it slopes down towards the water in the shape of flat promontories with rows of leafy trees. The main land is beyond these; it rises in the shape of broad hills, long undulating ridges formed by hump after hump, as if modelled in a soft material and covered by a carpet of grass and shrubs. They are no austere mountains but friendly hills, which invite to pleasant strolls. The painter has represented them on a summer eve; the fishermen are busy on the river in their small fishing-boats, while some distinguished visitors are being ferried over the river to the near shore, where friends are awaiting them with expressions of a happy welcome. The figures are exceedingly small, thus emphasizing through contrast the grandiosity of the view, yet they are fully visible in their white summer gowns and bring a note of human enjoyment into the scenery. They have received more importance than in earlier landscapes, though as yet far less than in the full-fledged romantic landscape art which reached its culmination in Hangzhou in the twelfth century.

The picture in Hui-hua kuan is accompanied by two colophons by Tung Ch'i-ch'ang in which it is praised as one of the supreme creations of Tung Yüan, an opinion which is confirmed by later experts who have left some statements on the picture. Its particular importance to us is, however, not based on these testimonials, but on its pictorial quality, which is distinctly superior to that of the previously mentioned pictures. Yet they all, though in different degrees, represent the same current of style and may thus with more or less reason be associated with the art of Tung Yüan.

A different kind of problem is connected with the beautiful scroll in the Boston Museum which is known as *A Clear Day in a Valley* and attributed to Tung Yüan (at least since the Ming period)¹ by prominent authorities such as Tung Ch'i-ch'ang and Wang Shih-ruin. One may indeed wonder what the considerations were that made these men attach the

name of Tung Yüan to a picture which is painted in a style that we do not know from other works before the twelfth century. It may be admitted that the general mood or tone of this suggestive interpretation of a misty river valley after rain has some reminiscences of Tung Yüan, but it is carried out with a poetic sentiment transformed into tones of luminous atmosphere and colouristic highlights of rich ink, that are far beyond the ken of Tung Yüan's art. In painting the mist rising between the boldly silhouetted wooded mountains and sweeping out over a shoreless plain, the painter has succeeded in suggesting a bridge into infinity for the thoughts of the beholder. If Tung Yüan actually accomplished this, the landscape-painters of the eleventh and twelfth centuries had little to add along similar lines (Pl. 167).

* * *

Chü-jan is usually mentioned in connexion with Tung Yüan because the pictures ascribed to him represent practically the same current of style as the so-called Tung Yüanis, though with marked individual variations. Chü-jan was the "orthodox transmitter" of the Tung Yüan tradition, to quote T'ang Hou, who furthermore wrote (in substance): "After Tung Yüan there was the monk Chü-jan from Chung-ling and the Taoist master Liu (Tao-shih). They lived at the same time and painted in the same way, but whereas Liu's paintings are done from the standpoint of a Taoist, Chü-jan's paintings are done from the standpoint of a Buddhist priest. That is the difference; both followed the style of Tung Yüan."

Very little is known about Chü-jan's personal life except that he was a monk who lived in a temple in Nanking. When Li Yü, the last ruler of the Southern T'ang dynasty, went to K'ai-feng in order to present his submission to the Sung emperor (975), Chü-jan was a member of his retinue and remained in the Sung capital, where he entered the K'ai Yüan monastery. His pictures were much appreciated at

¹ Cf. *Chinese Paintings in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*, with text by K. Tomita (1933), Pls. 33-36.

court; according to *Hsüan-ho hua-p'u* there were no less than 120 of them in the imperial collection.

Chü-jan's name is attached to at least half a dozen hanging scrolls in the Ku-kung collection¹ and to numerous paintings in private collections in China and Japan, several of which are handscrolls. But among the former hardly more than one gives the impression of an original, whereas the others are more or less close imitations executed in the Yüan period by admirers of Chü-jan's art.

Passing over the less convincing specimens, we may direct attention to the large picture known as *A Winding Path between High Mountains in Autumn*, which has been reproduced repeatedly both in China and in Japan, as a typical example of Chü-jan's art.² The composition consists of a huge central mountain cone reaching to the upper edge of the picture, and two projecting offsets forming between them a kind of gorge or inlet where some small buildings are grouped among the trees. There is a winding road leading into this sheltered nook. The mountain cone gives the impression of softer material than stone; it is made up of masses of bulging folds and humps divided by crevices in which shrubs and stumpy trees have taken root. The brush-strokes over the slopes seem to float downward in soft curves, accentuating the direction of the artist's way of painting as well as the convexity of the composite forms (Pl. 168).

Mountains of this peculiar type, more or less developed, appear in most of the pictures ascribed to Chü-jan. They may be observed for instance in the beautiful landscape in the Saitō collection which represents a mountain with deeply folded and terraced slopes rising stepwise over an inlet of water. There are various minor buildings on the rocky shore and higher up in a gully some half-hidden temples. The mountain streams form cascades over the terraces and the leafy trees stand like screens on the rocky ledges, which rise in successive layers. It may be that the details of the mountain, its folds, its terraces and crevices are more sharply cut and designed than in the preceding picture, but the

fundamental features are the same and the mountains are in both pictures utilized as a dominating central motif (Pl. 169). No painter has understood better than Chü-jan how to render not only the outward aspect of mountains but also their depth and massiveness.

The long handscroll which a few years ago was attributed to the master in the J. D. Chên collection in Hongkong represents the same kind of river scenery in the soft light of a summer eve as we have seen in Tung Yüan's *Hsiao-hsiang-t'u*. Like most of Chü-jan's landscapes, it is a pure ink-painting with fine gradations ranging from transparent grey to deep black, but the prevailing tone is a soft pearly haze, partly absorbed in the silk. Though executed on a relatively small scale, the picture contains a number of interesting illustrative details such as the fenced-in farmstead with its figures and buildings at the foot of the mountains, which spread like haystacks over the background. Further on, there is a rustic bridge which leads over to another section, where a row of imposing temple pavilions fill the gorge between the hills. After that follows another rustic homestead with straw-roofed buildings, close to a torrent which is lined with trees, and finally a low shore with long spits projecting into the water and a man in a boat who is pushing out from land. The elements of human activity and habitation are here more developed than in the previous paintings, which makes it perhaps more entertaining without destroying its fundamental character as an animated reflection of the quiet beauty of a summer evening (Pl. 170).

An Lu-ts'un, who was the owner of two landscapes by Chü-jan, characterizes the master's art very vividly in describing these pictures in *Mo-yüan hui-kuan*. One of them was a Snow-landscape; the other a representation of a Buddhist Hermitage in the Mountains. In the first-named "the mountains were all painted from the top towards the bottom, the wrinkles running all straight down and indicated with dark ink; the trees were bending and

¹ *K.-k. shu-hua chi*, vols. IV, V, VI, XXI, XLIII, XLIV.

² *Op. cit.*, VI and *Ömura*, II, 1.

leaning and the rocks (stones) painted like rolling clouds in a manner related to that of Li Ch'êng".

The description is worth recalling since it more or less fits several of Chü-jan's paintings, which seem to be painted from the top towards the bottom with wrinkles running downward like mountain brooks between grassy humps.

In the other picture mentioned by An Lu-ts'un, the upper parts of the mountains, he states, were agglomerations of stones which looked like lumps of alum, their rounded forms were painted with light ink and the long "hemp-fibre wrinkles" drawn running right down... The very tops of the mountains and the river-banks were rendered with large dots of deep ink; the pattern of the moss was like birds' claws. The brush-work of this painting was rich and overflowing; the resonance of the life-breath deep and tranquil. The artist had here completely freed himself from the manner of Li Ch'êng, Kuo (Chung-shu) and Hsü (Tao-ning). Later on Chiang Kuan-tao transmitted his tradition of style, and so did the masters towards the end of the Yüan period, who "inherited his garment and alms' bowl" (like the successive Ch'an masters).

This picture seems to have been a more important and mature product of Chü-jan's genius, yet most of the features mentioned here, such as the agglomerated humps on the upper portion of the mountains, their long hemp-fibre wrinkles, the richly flowing ink concentrated in some dark spots, and the prevailing impression of deep tranquillity, are characteristic of most of his works. It was no doubt this harmonious atmosphere in conjunction with the pictorially effective brush-work which gave rise to the great admiration of Chü-jan's paintings among the romantic landscape-painters of later periods.

★ ★ ★

Chü-jan's activity fell to no small extent within the first decades of the Sung dynasty, yet he continued the stylistic tradition of the preceding epoch. The same is true of Yen Wên-kuei, who was a little younger and active until the beginning of the

eleventh century. He was a southerner like Tung Yüan and Chü-jan, born at Wu-hsing in Chekiang, but not a landscape poet to the same extent as the above-mentioned predecessors.

According to the tradition reported in *Shêng-ch'ao ming-hua p'ing* and elsewhere, he served first as a soldier, but left the army in the reign of the emperor T'ai-tsung (976-997) and went to the capital, expecting to make his living as a painter. The beginning was not so easy; he was obliged to sell his pictures in the T'ien-mên street, but there he was observed by a high official and painter, the Edict-compiler Kao I, who was greatly impressed by the artistic merit of his work. The painter-official asked imperial permission to employ Yen Wên-kuei as an assistant for painting trees and rocks in certain pictures to be executed in the Hsiang-kuo temple, and as Yen proved his talent to the satisfaction of the emperor, he had thenceforth a rapid career as a painter. He became a member of the Academy and a *tai chao* at court.

It is reported that "he started out by taking Hao Hui (a practically unknown painter) as his master", but developed a style of his own without following any of the old masters in particular. His ambition seems to have been to develop an unsurpassed technical efficiency, which sometimes may have conduced him to feats of artistry rather than of art. He excelled in minutely painted small pictures, in which he rendered "a thousand *li* within a foot square", such as the *Ship in Storm*, in which all the details of the ship's tackle and the hustle and bustle of the sailors could be observed in spite of its very small size.¹ Another remarkable work of his represented *Night Market on Midsummer's Eve*, in which he was "perfectly successful in depicting the vastness and multiplicity of it all".²

Yen Wên-kuei's almost meticulous exactness as a draughtsman and his great ability to render large views within narrow space may also be observed in some still existing paintings. A good example

¹ Cf. Giles, *Introduction*, p. 107.

² Translation by Soper, *op. cit.*, p. 173.

(Pl. 171) is the hanging scroll in the Ku-kung collection which represents towering mountains along a partly visible river.¹ The mountains are folded in innumerable crevices and rise in terraces the one above the other, and roads wind along the edges, leading down from temples which are half-hidden in the hollows. Down on the shore are some bridges spanning the bays and travellers proceeding to the rest-houses. The design of the mountains, which seem to be bulging out of the picture, reminds us of corresponding parts in Fan K'uan's pictures, though the whole thing is rendered on a smaller scale with a brush-work that is almost cuttingly sharp. Everything is stated with absolute clearness, the painter leaves us in no doubt as to the construction of the houses or the outfit of the travellers, even though they are no larger than pin-heads. It is a kind of landscape that corresponds to An Lu-ts'un's description of a picture by Yen Wên-kuei in his collection called "Clear Morning Light over Lu Shan",²

According to his words, it represented "piled up peaks and innumerable ravines, buildings standing on dangerous rocks and in dense groves, mountain passes with palisaded roads along precipices, houses and huts, streams and bridges, lines of sandy shores and water with barges and fishing boats, all beautifully rendered in great detail. The effect of the ink is rich and noble; the picture is really of the divine class. But since the painter was particularly trained in boundary painting, his brush-work is lacking in ease and seems a little wooden."

A better, more understanding description of Yen Wên-kuei's art and his merits and faults as a painter would be difficult to formulate. The master's works are of the highest class, according to An Lu-ts'un, in spite of an almost excessive accuracy of detail, because they render the innumerable details of nature in symbols of lofty structure with rich ink.

¹ *K.-k. shu-hua chi*, vol. II. Size, 3' 3" × 1' 4".

² *Mo-yüan hui-kuan*, sect. N. Sung, p. 3.

III

Kuo Hsi and his Essay on Landscape-painting

THE GRAND manner of romantic landscape-painting conceived and practised by some of the leading masters of the Five Dynasties and the first decades of the Sung period, was further developed, with individual variations, by their followers during the eleventh century. The most important among the later masters was Kuo Hsi, who in some respects may be said to have consummated the tradition and impressed the final stamp on this kind of monochrome landscape-painting. He was closely tied to tradition, yet at the same time through some of his great individual achievements an initiator, and became as such an important link with the subsequent evolution in the field of landscape-painting.

He was born at Wên-hsien in Ho-yang (Honan), a name by which he was sometimes called, and may thus be classified as a Northerner like Li Ch'êng and

Fan K'uan. The exact dates of his life are not known, but his birth may have occurred about 1020 or 1025; his main activity fell into the reign of the emperor Shên-tsung (1068-1085). At the beginning of the Hsi-ning era (1068-1077) he received orders to paint a screen for a hall in the palace.¹ "He served as an assistant teacher (*i-hsüeh*) in the *Yü-hua yüan*² (i.e. the Academy of Painting) and made a name for himself with his landscapes and pictures of dry trees. To begin with he relied on his dexterity, but as he worked on he became more refined and profound. He took on a little of Li Ch'êng's manner and created some wonderful compositions. But later on he followed his own inspiration and expressed ideas of his own mind on the white walls of lofty halls,

¹ According to *T'u-hua chien wên chih*, (Landscape-painters.)

² *Hsian-ho hua-p'u*, vol. II.

giving free play to his hand in painting tall pines, lofty trees, winding streams, craggy cliffs, deep gorges, high peaks and beautiful mountain ridges, sometimes cut off by clouds and mist, sometimes hidden in haze, representing them with a thousand variations and ten thousand forms. The critics claim that Kuo Hsi was without an equal at the time; and while he was getting on in years his brush-work grew stronger; it increased in vigour as the years told on his face."

The old historians are unanimous in praising the boldness and strength of Kuo Hsi's art. He excelled in monumental designs and he executed them with something of the same spontaneous vigour as was so highly praised in the brush-work of Wu Tao-tzū of old. In this connexion may be recalled the twelve large screens which he painted for a Taoist in the Hsien-shêng temple at the end of the Yüan-fêng era (1078-1085). They are described in a colophon,¹ written about fifteen years later, as more than twenty feet high and representing "mighty mountains and mingling waters, not closed or covered by clouds. The brush-work was without a flaw. It often attracted Su Tung-p'o and his brother Su Chê, and after a whole day of contemplation the latter said with a sigh: "Kuo Hsi has made great progress in his handling of brush and ink since the time when he painted the copies of Li Ch'êng's six pictures of pouring rain (now in the possession of the Su family); as may be seen in the present pictures made in his old age, which are precious". (Colophon written in the year 1100.)

Kuo Hsi was one of those rare masters whose creative powers only increased with the years; his productivity must have been extraordinary. There were cartloads of paintings on silk by him in the imperial collection, but in later years he also did a great number of huge landscapes directly on the plastered walls. These seem indeed to have been more congenial than smooth silk to his dynamic temperament and impetuous brush. How this was done is told by Têng Ch'un in *Hua Chi* in a description which may be based on the accounts of people

who had met the old painter and seen some of his late works.²

"According to tradition Yang Hui-chih studied (painting) together with Wu Tao-tzū, but as Wu Tao-tzū succeeded better in his studies, Yang Hui-chih felt humiliated at reaching only the same fame, and turned to modelling in relief. They were at the time the greatest in their respective arts. In the district of the capital there were many landscapes modelled on the walls by Hui-chih. When Kuo Hsi saw them, he conceived a new idea. He asked the masons not to make the plaster smooth, but to throw it on the wall with the hand, thus making projections at some places and hollows at other spots. When the plaster had dried he applied the ink, following its forms and lineaments and feeling his way as he drew peaks and ridges, trees and streams, adding on high buildings, pavilions, human figures and the like as naturally as if they had been made by Heaven. These were called shadow-walls, and such pictures were done quite frequently later on. They were lingering ideas of Sung Fu-ku's way of stretching white silk over ruined walls."³

¹ *Shu-hua p'u*, vol. 82, 1.29.

² *Hua Chi*, Tsa shuo, Lun yüan.

³ According to an anecdote reported by Shên Kua in *Ming-ch'i pi-t'an*, Sung Ti, tzu Fu-ku, who was an older contemporary of Kuo Hsi, gave the following advice to the painter Ch'ên Yung-chih, as to the best method of obtaining a natural effect in landscapes:

"You should select a ruined wall and spread a piece of white silk over it. Then lean over the wall and look at it carefully morning and evening until you can see through the silk the protuberances and the flat parts with their curving forms, which all make up the picture of a landscape. Retain these in your mind and fix them in your eye. The raised parts are mountains, the low parts are waters, the hollows are valleys, the furrows are streams; the clear parts are the nearest, the obscure ones more distant. As the spirit grasps them and the thoughts give them form, it will seem to you as if there were human beings, birds, plants and trees flying and moving, coming and going. When they all are clear in your eye, you can play with the brush quite freely, uniting in silence with the spirit, and the scenery will be as made by Heaven and not like a thing made by man. That is called a living picture. From this time Yung-chih made great progress in painting." Cf. Giles, *Introduction*, p. 114. The method seems to have reached a certain popularity at the time; it was apparently also tried by Kuo Hsi, whose most strikingly fantastic designs may have been prepared in this way.

Such wall-decorations were not, however, in keeping with the aesthetic mode which gained ground during the next generation, i.e. in the reign of the emperor Hui-tsung (1101-1126), when academic rules and respect for antiquity became of primary importance. Kuo Hsi was evidently too independent and imaginative a painter for the imperial connoisseur and his works had to make way for products of a more traditional academic type. This is illustrated by T'eng Ch'un's account of how his father saved a cartload of Kuo Hsi's discarded pictures.

This gentleman, who at the time was serving as an imperial secretary, deputed a man to examine and put in order the pictures by the academicians representing birds, flowers, bamboos and other emblems of good luck which were used as decorations in some of the palace halls. One day as he went to watch the picture-mounter he found him rubbing the table with an old landscape-painting on silk. My father took hold of it and found it to be by Kuo Hsi. On inquiry he found out that it came from the Palace Storage for waste material.

"The emperor Shên-tsung in his time liked Kuo Hsi's work and had an entire hall decorated with his pictures; but when the present emperor (i.e. Hui-tsung) came to the throne, he replaced this decoration by older pictures and sent Kuo Hsi's works to the store-room. My father said: 'What luck! I will ask the Emperor if I may keep this old picture'. The next day he received an imperial letter and a cartload of paintings; and thenceforth the walls of his house were completely hung with pictures by Kuo Hsi, which formed a most unusual collection."

The story is worth remembering when we wonder about the rarity of Kuo Hsi's works nowadays. It tends to support the fact noted above that the appreciation of his landscapes was rapidly declining in the academic circle of the emperor Hui-tsung. And when the imperial collector set such an example of rough handling in discarding his paintings, other amateurs no doubt followed suit with the consequence that the wealth of production left by Kuo

Hsi was rapidly depleted. The pictures attributed to him are relatively few, but they are marked by a fairly homogeneous style which furthermore may be observed in some anonymous works of his time and following.

Of the eight pictures reproduced under Kuo Hsi's name in the Palace Museum publications (two in *Ku-kung*, and six in *Ku-kung shu-hua chi*, vols. XVIII, XXI, XXVI, XXVII, XXX, XXXIX) four are evidently later imitations, i.e. executed in the Ming and Ch'ing periods after compositions by the master (*K.-k.* VI, and *K.-k. shu-hua chi*, vols. XXVII, XXX, XXXIX), while the others seem to be of the Sung period and may with more or less good reasons be attributed to the master. Besides these there is an excellent handscroll, formerly in the Tuan Fang collection and now in the Freer Gallery which is generally considered as an authentic specimen of Kuo Hsi's art, and a minor scroll known as "Coloured Trees in an Open View" which recently formed part of the Chang Ta-ch'ien collection. The pictures ascribed to the painter in Japanese collections are all of later date.

Recalling the tradition that Kuo Hsi started as a student of Li Ch'êng's art, we may expect to find some traces of the older master's influence in his early works. As an example of such presumably early works may be mentioned the picture in the Palace Museum which represents some tortuous old cedar-trees rising in front of snow-covered mountains (Pl. 174). The motif is known through pictures ascribed to Li Ch'êng and Hsü Tao-ning, but it is here rendered with individual accents in a strikingly monumental design. The structural strength of the picture is certainly worthy of a great master like Kuo Hsi, but to what extent the brush-work supports the attribution is difficult to tell from a reproduction. It is, however, superior to the somewhat similar picture of old cedar-trees, also ascribed to the master, which was in a private collection in China and is reproduced in *Tōsō Gemmin* (p. 38).

Some reminiscences from Li Ch'êng may possibly also be observed (particularly in the shaping of the

mountains) in the picture which is called Spring Snow on a Mountain Pass and bears the signature of the master with the date 1072 (*K.-k. shu-hua chi*, vol. XVIII). The picture, which was included in the London Exhibition 1935-1936 and there catalogued as "probably Yüan", is not in a good state (being much worn and darkened and cut down in size), which makes it appear somewhat dull, but stylistically it seemed to me more like a work of the Sung period. It may be a somewhat mutilated ruin of a Kuo Hsi painting; the trees and the bulging rocks reveal some affinity with Li Ch'êng's manner.

The picture in the Freer Gallery which is known as Autumn in the Valley of the Yellow River, or Clearing Autumn Skies over Mountains and Valleys, is stylistically related to the last-mentioned picture, but better preserved and superior in quality. The scroll is evidently not complete, but the composition is nevertheless well balanced. It is divided into sections by broad transversal valleys which with their sweeping lines look like depressions between huge waves, the latter formed by successive ranges of boulders and creviced rocks. At the lower edge stand some trees mostly of the barren type, forming dark silhouettes against the misty mountains. These as well as some of the mountain boulders may be said to show some connexion with Li Ch'êng's mannerism, but the design as a whole has a more fluent character than the older master's compositions. The brush-work is relatively soft, evoking the hazy tonality of a misty morning in the Yangtse valley, a distinctly pictorial quality which is more characteristic of the painters active in the South than of the northerners (Pls. 172, 173).

The third of the Kuo Hsis from the Palace Museum which was exhibited in London, represents a Steep Cliff and Temple Buildings at its Foot on the Shore of a Misty River.¹ It is a large design almost six feet in height, impressive through the bold shape of the mountains. The contrast between this and the misty river below is strongly accentuated, but the sharply-cut stratified rock formations are rather overemphasized and painted in a manner which

has little in common with the brush-work in other pictures ascribed perhaps with more reason to Kuo Hsi.

Kuo Hsi's own way of transposing great mountains into expressionistic symbols of power, mass and movement may be realized through a comparison of two pictures attributed to the master in the Palace Museum collection, *i.e.* The Village in Wild and Lofty Mountains² and An Early Spring Landscape.³ The pictures are related in design but very different in brush-work and finish. Characteristic of both is the massive central mountain, deeply creviced and composed of huge boulders which seem to be turning and twisting, as if moved by some inherent force. The trees along the ridges and terraces are subject to the same rhythm, but the waters at the foot of the mountains are smooth and undisturbed.

Such general features are more or less characteristic of both pictures, but the differences are no less obvious and may be observed even in the reproductions. The Village among Wild and Lofty Mountains is very clear in tone, and the lower part of the picture is a sort of open river-valley with many pleasant illustrative details, such as the fishermen in the boat, the travellers on the roads, the old man playing the *ch'in* in the pavilion, and the men drinking tea in the rest-house, while the horses are grazing outside, etc., which all contribute to an atmosphere of friendly intimacy. Every object is clearly visible; the light is evenly distributed, the far-off mountains are no less distinct than the houses and boulders nearby. The execution is somewhat baffling, suggesting the work of a highly competent painter of the eighteenth century carefully reproducing the formal aspects of a grand design (Pl. 176).

The other picture, called Early Spring (signed and dated 1072), takes us into an entirely different world in spite of some formal resemblances with the

¹ *K.-k. shu-hua chi*, vol. XXVI. Also in the Illustrated Chinese Catalogue, No. 16.

² *Ku-kung*, vol. VI. Signed. Size, 5' 9" × 3' 11".

³ *Ku-kung*, vol. X. Signed, dated 1072. Size, 4' 9" × 3' 1".

preceding one. The modifications in the design are significant: The great central mountain is brought right down into the midst of the bottom section; its bulging and convoluting shapes, furrows and ridges are accompanied by the writhing trunks and branches of bare trees and framed on both sides by rushing streams and winding waters. The boats and the men in them are so small and insignificant that they can hardly be distinguished, and that is still more true of the buildings at the bottom of the side gorges where the haze is dense. Here the view becomes an impenetrable mystery, but above is clearness: high ridges with fringes of innumerable small trees in dark silhouette against the sky. The details such as the twisting twigs and branches are infinitesimal, the shapes and folds of the boulders of endless variation, but they are all woven into a great winding movement that dominates the main part of the picture. With his creative imagination the artist has penetrated into the actual constitution or organism of the mountain, conceiving it as a huge antediluvian being evocative of a primordial world in which even the rocks, in spite of their weight and massiveness, seem to be pulsating with a cosmic rhythm (PL175).

None of the earlier masters could bring a great and exuberantly rich motif so completely under the control of an all-pervading cosmic rhythm or fill it with a similar degree of dramatic expressiveness. They may have been able to suggest the poetry and grandeur of certain aspects of nature, but they did not reveal to us like Kuo Hsi the conflict of contending forces, the primordial struggle and growth of things.

It is easy to understand why some of the old Chinese critics in describing Kuo Hsi's landscapes have recourse to more or less fantastic metaphors. They tell us that he painted mountains which were like coiled up snakes, that the stones in some of his pictures were massed together into shapes like devils' faces, and that the trees stretched their branches like the talons of gigantic eagles towards the torn and tattered clouds. He painted winter

scenes with snow in the crevices and shivering people in a ferry crossing a river, spring mornings with awakening birds and hazy woods, but his favourite motifs were autumn evenings when the sky is clear and geese are returning in a long line which is communing with the mountain ranges beyond the barren plain. One of these autumn scenes makes the commentator regret that he has a body which does not allow him to follow the geese towards the setting sun.¹

There can be no doubt that Kuo Hsi had a considerable influence on the following evolution of landscape-painting in spite of the fact that his art and manner did not correspond to the official taste in the academic circle of the emperor Hui-tsung. Several interesting examples of the Kuo Hsi type of landscape-painting may be observed in the Palace Museum publications, for instance, *Ku-kung Shu-hua chi*, vols. II and XI, though none of them is provided with an individual signature or attribution. They are simply grand landscapes expressing the spirit and stylistic tradition of Kuo Hsi. In most of them there are old gnarled pines or cedars and thorny shrubs, rooted in crevices of the rocks or between boulders, and bending out over torrents gushing from unseen caves. The patterns are intricate, "ingenious and complicated", to quote Kuo Jo-hsi, and the atmosphere is austere and solitary, making us feel that the world of Kuo Hsi's creative imagination was superior in strength and structure to that of ordinary mortals.²

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¹ Cf. *Shu-hua fang*, vol. VII, pp. 28, 29.

² It is not possible to enumerate here a number of landscapes attributed to various masters which show a more or less evident relation to Kuo Hsi's manner, but one or two examples may be mentioned. The much worn fragmentary scroll in the Abe collection in the Osaka Museum, signed Hu Shun-ch'ên and dated 1122, has been a fine picture but is now hardly more than a shadow of what it was once.

Another picture of interest is the handscroll in the museum in Toledo, attributed to Kuo Hsi, representing a River Scene with Bare Trees and Craggy Mountain in Snow. The design is impressive and the picture has an atmosphere of austerity possibly increased by its worn condition, but the brush-work is somewhat rough, denoting an inferior master of a later period.

Kuo Hsi's very prominent place in the history of landscape-painting in China is the result not only of his creative activity as a painter but also of his achievement as an interpreter of the ideals and principles of this art. This has been transmitted, at least in part, in the well-known treatise called *Lin-ch'üan kao-chih chi* (The Great Message of Forests and Streams) which was composed by his son Kuo Ssü on the basis of his father's teachings and memories of his mode of working, his motifs and compositions. It is, as a whole, a rather lengthy and mixed essay, containing passages which throw a vivid light on the painter's activity, his ideals and methods, but also a certain amount of more indifferent observations of effects in nature and geographic conditions, which have only a peripheral connexion with its central aesthetic purport. It offers, however, more actual insight into the work and principles of Chinese landscape-painters at a period of full expansion than any other essay or treatise composed in the Sung, Yüan or Ming period and is as such, at least in part, a source of primary importance for a better understanding of this art.

The treatise is divided into five sections. The first and most important is called *Shan-shui hsün* (Comments on Landscape). This seems to contain some of the old master's own words, or at least a close report on his teaching, interspersed with commentaries by his son. The second section is called *Hua i* (Ideas or Motifs for Painting) and contains the most interesting observations on the painter's psychological attitude and his manner of working. The three remaining sections are less important from an aesthetic viewpoint: *Hua chieh* (Secrets of Painting) is devoted mainly to technical problems; *Hua-ko shih i* (Supplement to the Rules of Painting) contains descriptions of Kuo Hsi's compositions; and *Hua t'i* (Talks about Painting) is a selection of anecdotal material unconnected with the rest of the essay.

Further comments on the history and composition of the text may here not be necessary. It should only be added that though the earliest edition

known at present is of the year 1271, it is possible that part of the text was published already in the fourth year of the Ta-kuan era, i.e. 1110. If this is correct, the probability that certain sections of the treatise contain Kuo Hsi's own words with comments by his son, is increased.¹ It is, however, relatively speaking, the most complete and authentic treatise on landscape-painting from the Sung period, or earlier, which has been transmitted in its original form. Considering the length and the inequalities of the text, we have not included a full translation of the portions of the text here, but only the most significant, i.e. the main part of the first section, *Shan-shui hsün*, and shorter extracts from *Hua i* and *Hua chieh*.

SHAN-SHUI HSÜN

(Comments on Landscapes)

WHY DO superior men love landscape, what is the reason for it? Hills and gardens are the constant dwelling-places for one who seeks to cultivate his original nature; springs and rocks are the constant joy for the whistling rambler; fishing and wood-gathering are the constant occupations for the hermit and the recluse; the ape and the crane are constantly viewed by those who want to fly and to call. Bridles and fetters in the din of the world are always repugnant to human nature, while Sages and Immortals in haze and mist are what human nature yearns for but cannot reach.

¹ For further information regarding the various editions of the treatise, see *Shu-hua shu-lu chieh-t'i* (Annotated Bibliography of Books on Calligraphy and Painting), Peiping 1931.

Reprints of the text are included in *Wang-shih hua-yüan* and *Mei-shu t'ung-shu*. A complete, though relatively free translation of the whole text by Shio Sakamishi was published in 1935 under the title: *An Essay on Landscape Painting by Kuo Hsi* (in *The Wisdom of the East Series*). Previously, minor extracts had been rendered in Fenollosa's *Epochs of Chinese and Japanese Art*, II, pp.12-19 (very free, partly misleading), by Petrucci in *Oriental. Zeitschrift*, I, pp.395-400 (with commentary in French), by Waley in: *An Introduction to the Study of Chinese Painting*, pp.189-194 (Extracts from *Shan-shui-hsün* and *Hua i*, including poems; and in my publication: *The Chinese on the Art of Painting* (here corrected).

In times of peace and glory the two authorities are those of the prince and the parents; and if they are pure, purity and virtue will rule in public and private life. With such bonds, how could the perfect man retire on high, break away from the customs of the common world and be as immaculate as Mount Chi and the River P'ing or have the same fragrance as Huang and Ch'i?¹ The Ode of the White Colt and the Song of the Purple Fungus² are gone forever, yet the wish for forests and springs, the companionship of the mists and vapours remains in his dreams. The ears and the eyes perceive them no more, but when grasped by a master hand, they are revealed again; and it is possible to enjoy, without stepping out of the house or leaving the sitting-mat, streams and valleys. The cries of apes and the songs of birds seem to reach the ear again, while the luminous mountains and the colour of the far expanding waters attract the eyes. Is it not "to please the mind of another and really (thereby) attain my own wish"?

That is why the fundamental idea of landscape painting is so highly appreciated in the world. But if this is not realized and the landscapes are looked at in a light-hearted way, is it not like blurring a divine spectacle and defiling the pure wind?

There are various kinds of landscape paintings, some are spread out into large compositions, in which there is not a thing too much; others are condensed into quite small views in which, however, nothing is left out. There are also different ways of looking at landscapes; if one looks at them with the heart of the woods and the streams, their value becomes great, but if one looks at them with proud and haughty eyes, their value becomes quite low.

Landscapes are large things; he who contemplates them should be at some distance; only so is it possible for him to behold in one view all the shapes and atmospheric effects of mountains and streams. As to paintings of men and women, executed with a fine brush, they can be unrolled in the hand or on a small table, and thus in one glance be completely seen and examined. These are all different manners of painting.

It has been truly said that among landscapes there are those fit to walk through, those fit to contemplate, those fit to ramble in, and those fit to live in. When a picture reaches one of these standards it enters the class of the wonderful, but those fit to walk through or to contemplate are not equal to those fit to ramble in or to live in. Why is it so? Look at the landscapes of today. They comprise distances of several hundred *li*, but not three or four tenths of the space are fit to idle or dwell in. Yet, they are accepted as of the class of pictures fit to idle or dwell in. But the yearning of the noble man for woods and streams is aroused by the existence of such beautiful places. Therefore painters must keep this idea in mind and beholders should examine pictures according to the same. That may be called not to lose sight of the fundamental idea.

Painting also has its laws of physiognomy. Li Ch'êng's progeny was prosperous and abundant; he made the foot of the mountains and the face of the earth very thick and strong, broad and large, graceful at the top and luxuriant below, which is in agreement with the characteristics of having a progeny; but I will not dwell particularly on physiognomy but give the reasons why it should be so.

There is no difference between the study of painting and the study of calligraphy. Those who nowadays study Chung Yu,³ Wang Hsi-chih, Yü Shih-nan,⁴ and Liu Kung-ch'üan⁵ will after some time become like them. Great men and learned scholars do not limit themselves to one school, it is necessary to combine (several models), and to study and make observations on a broad basis, so that one may form a personal style and gradually reach perfection. Nowadays students from Ch'i and Lu (Shantung)

¹ Huang and Ch'i, i.e. the names of two of the "Four Grey-heads" at the beginning of the Han period.

² Two classic odes, the first in *Shih-ching*.

³ Chung Yu, d. 230, famous for his skill in the *li*-style.

⁴ Yü Shih-nan (558-648), a brilliant writer in the time of T'ang T'ai-tsung.

⁵ Liu Kung-ch'üan (778-865), one of China's most famous calligraphists.

imitate only Ying-ch'iu (Li Ch'êng), while students from Kuan and Shên (Shensi) imitate only Fan K'uan; they follow only one road in their study, tramping in the footsteps of their predecessors, although their respective provinces comprise many thousand *li* and a great many districts and kinds of people worthy to be represented. To follow only one single school in one's study has since olden times been considered a defect; it is like playing only one chord; those who will not hear it should not blame those who do not hear. From earliest times the new has always seemed attractive and the old boring to the ears and eyes of men. I think that is why great men and scholars do not keep to one single style or school.

Liu Tzu-liou¹ has well discussed literary style, but I think that not only literature but everything has its secret rules; this being so, always, how much more for painting. But how can it be told? Whatever motif the painter represents, be it large or small, complicated or simple, he should do it by concentrating on its essential nature. If something of the essential is lacking, the spirit is not focused. The spirit must be fused with the work; if not so, the essentials will not be clear. He must be severe and serious in his work in order to give it dignity. If he is not severe his thoughts will not be profound. He must be persevering (diligent) in order to make it complete; otherwise the picture will not be properly finished.

Therefore if he has cultivated a spirit of laziness but forces himself (to paint), his brush-work will be soft and weak without decision. This is the fault of not concentrating on the essential. If he has cultivated a spirit of sluggishness and then goes at it in a disorderly way, the forms become obscure and evasive without vigour. This is the fault of not fusing the spirit with the work. If he tackles the work in a light-hearted manner, his forms will become unsteady, sketchy, and not complete. This is the fault of lack of seriousness. If he is conceited and careless, his style will be lax and coarse and not properly adjusted. This is the fault of working

without diligence. Thus, lack of decision leads to faults of definition; lack of vigour to loss of ease; lack of completeness to faults of composition, lack of orderly arrangement to faults in the relation between the important and the indifferent. These are the greatest faults of the painters. But this can be conveyed to the intelligent.

I, Kuo Ssü, often saw my father working on one or two pictures. Sometimes he would put them away and did not pay any attention to them. Ten to twenty days often passed before he would turn to them again. He repeated the process two or three times, thus showing his disinclination. Wasn't this kind of disinclination what he meant by the spirit of laziness? When, however, he felt inspired and saw his way, he worked forgetting everything else; but if the least disturbing thing happened, he would put away (his work) and pay no attention to it. Wasn't such relaxation what he meant by a disturbed spirit?

On the day when he was going to paint (he would seat himself) at a bright window before a clean table and burn incense right and left. He took a fine brush and the most excellent ink, washed his hands and cleaned the ink-stone as if to receive an important guest. He let the thoughts settle in his soul, and then he worked. Isn't this what he meant by not working in the hurry of excitement? He planned and penetrated it thoroughly, he added to it and made it richer, not only once or twice but over and over again. Each picture had to be repeated, done over from the beginning to the end with great care as if guarding against a stern enemy; only after that was it finished. Isn't this what he meant by not working in a slighting and careless way?

And it may be said that everything, be it large or small, must be handled in a similar way in order to be well accomplished. My father often explained these things to me in great detail, and I have followed his teachings all through life as the path of progress and refinement.

He who is learning to paint flowers takes a stalk of the flower, places it in a deep hole in the ground and

¹ Liu Tsung-yüan (773-819), a famous poet and essayist.

examines it from above; in this way the flower may be (completely) grasped from the four sides. He who learns to paint bamboos places a stalk of bamboo in the clear moonlight, so that its shadow falls on a white wall; in this way the real shape of the bamboo comes out. He who learns to paint landscapes should not do it differently. He should go himself to the mountains and streams in order to grasp them; then their aspects and meaning will become clear to him. The effect of real streams and valleys is comprehended at a distance; when seen close by (only) their component elements are grasped.

The clouds and vapours of real landscapes are not the same at the four seasons. In spring they are light and diffused, in summer rich and dense, in autumn scattered and thin, in winter dark and dull. When not simply disrupted shapes but rather such general effects are to be seen in the picture, the clouds and the vapours have an air of life.

Mist around mountains is not the same at the four seasons. The mountains of spring are light and seductive as if smiling; the mountains of summer have a blue-green colour which seems to be dropping all over; the mountains of autumn are bright and clean as if embellished with rouge (cosmetics); the mountains of winter are sad and tranquil as if sleeping. When such general ideas are expressed in the picture and the representation is not finicky, the atmosphere of misty mountains is well rendered.

The wind and rain of true landscapes can be grasped only at a distance; when examined at close range, one cannot make out the aspects of their complex directions and movements.

The light and shade of real mountains can be seen in their completeness only from afar; if seen close by, they become narrow patches, and one does not obtain the effect of light and dark, the visible and the invisible.

Figures on the mountains mark out the roads; high buildings on the mountains serve to make the scenery more important. Trees on the mountains with their light and shade divide the far from the

near. Streams in the valleys should be sometimes disrupted, sometimes continuous, thus indicating the depth and shallowness of the gullies. Ferries and bridges are indications of human activity. Fishing-boats and fishing-rods are satisfying evidences of human intentions.

The majestic big mountain is the lord of all the minor mountains, and thus these should be arranged around it in a certain order as well as the ridges and the mounds, the forests and the gulleys. It is the chief of everything far and near, large and small. Its appearance is like that of an emperor majestically enthroned among princes gathering at court, but with no arrogance or haughtiness.

The tall and straight pine represents the leader among the trees. By its leadership order is brought in among the climbing and creeping herbs; it is the one on whom they rely. It seems like a superior man, contented and successful among minor men who serve him confidently, whilst he causes them no vexation or annoyance.

A mountain seen at close range has a certain appearance; but if it is seen at a distance of several *li* it has a different appearance, and if seen at a distance of several tens of *li* it looks still different. Every distance causes a difference; the shapes of the mountains vary with every step. The front of a mountain has a certain aspect; its side has another; its back still another. From whatever side one looks at a mountain, the aspect is different. It may be said that the shapes of the mountains depend on the viewpoint of the beholder. A single mountain may thus combine the shapes and aspects of several tens or hundreds of mountains, which should be thoroughly grasped.

The mountains of spring and summer have a certain air; those of autumn and winter have another air; in other words, the views at the four seasons are not the same. Morning and evening, a clear or an overcast sky, also produce various effects in the mountains. It may be said that their aspects change in accordance with the hours of the day. One mountain may thus contain the effects or

ideas of several tens or hundreds, and they should all be properly studied.

The mist and clouds of spring mountains form a continuous whole; people are joyful. The luxuriant trees of summer mountains are abundant and shady; people are peaceful. Autumn mountains are clear and pure; the leaves are falling; people are solemn. Winter mountains are covered up by dark storm-clouds; people are depressed.

Contemplation of such pictures evokes in men the corresponding ideas. It is as if one really were among the mountains, and such is the intention beyond the depicted scenery. Seeing the blue haze and the white paths, one feels like walking. Seeing the quiet streams and the setting sun, one feels like stopping in contemplation. When one looks at lonely men living in the mountains, one feels like staying there. When one sees the cliffs, the streams and the stones, one feels like rambling among them. The contemplation of such pictures arouses corresponding feelings in the heart; it is as if one really came to those places. That is the unexpected marvel of such pictures.

* * *

Sung shan (in Honan) has many beautiful streams, Hua shan (in Shensi) has many beautiful peaks, Hêng shan (in Hunan) has many isolated cliffs, Ch'ang shan has many serial crags, T'ai shan rises as a dominant master peak. T'ien-t'ai (Chekiang), Wu-i (Fukien), Lu shan (Kiangsi), Huo shan (Shansi), Yen-tang (Chekiang), Min shan (Szechuan), O-mei shan (Szechuan), Wu-hsia (Szechuan), T'ien-t'an (Honan), Wang-wu (Shansi), Lin-lü (Honan), Wu-tang (Hupei) are all very famous mountains and the chief places from which treasures are extracted, and in them are the caves whither the ancient sages retired.

Wonderfully lofty and divinely beautiful are these mountains; no one can exhaust their marvels. If you desire to grasp the work of the Creator, then (if you love them) nothing is more inspiring, nothing more essential than to study them. Nothing

is grander than to wander about and to satiate the eyes with them. When I have stored up the impressions in the heart, then with the eye unconscious of the silk and the hand unconscious of brush and ink, marvellous, mysterious, boundless becomes that picture of mine.

Thus, as Hui-su¹ listened in the night to the sound of the Chia-ling River, his grass writing became still more beautiful, and as Chang Tien² looked on Lady Kung-sun's sword-play, his brush-manner became still more expressive.

Those who nowadays wield the brush do not go in for a broad preparation; they do not make sufficiently clear and thorough observations, their practice does not go very far, and they do not grasp the essential features. Yet, when they get hold of a piece of paper or a bit of wall, they at once wave the brush and let the ink flow. How could they then gather the scenery with its mist and clouds and convey the message of the streams and the mountains?

* * *

What does it mean to make observations in a clear and thorough way? In recent pictures of mountains the peaks are no more than three or five; and in the pictures of water the waves do not exceed three or five. Lack of clearness and thoroughness causes such defects. In a picture of mountains there should be both high and low, large and small – a mild harmony in the back, the head reverently saluting, the limbs entirely responsive³ – such is the adequate idea of the beauty of mountains. Water should be painted with order and confusion, whirling, splashing, overflowing, leading out towards a far expanse. The representation is satisfying only when the water is sufficiently abundant.

¹ Hui-su, a famous calligrapher of the T'ang period, who excelled in "grass characters".

² Chang Tien, "Crazy Chang", was another eccentric character of the T'ang period, famous for his writing and his love of wine.

³ This is a free transposition of Mencius' words (VII, 21, 4) translated by Legge (first ed., p. 336): "their growth and manifestation are a mild harmony in the countenance, a rich fullness in the back, and the character imparted in the four limbs. Those limbs know how to arrange themselves without being told."

What does it mean not to have a broad experience? Painters of today who are born in Wu (Kiangsu) or in Yüeh (Chekiang) paint the high and barren places of the South-east; those who live in Hsien and Ch'iu (Shensi) represent the strong and toppling Kuan and Lung mountains. Those who learned from Fan K'uan are lacking in the refinement and beauty of Ying-ch'iu (Li Ch'eng). Those who learned from Wang Wei have not Kuan T'ung's bony style (structural manner). All these faults arise from insufficient experience.

What does it mean not to grasp the essential features? Mountains of a thousand *li* are not marvellous everywhere, and how could a water-course of ten thousand *li* be beautiful in all its parts?

The T'ai-hang range reposes on (the old) central China, but its front is Lin-lü (a place in Honan). T'ai shan occupies Ch'i and Lu (Shantung), but its most beautiful aspects are at Lung-yen. If one paints these mountains quite alike, what difference will there then be from a map? All the defects of this kind result from not grasping the essentials.

Therefore, to paint only sloping banks leads to coarseness; to paint only solitary and empty places leads to meanness; to paint only figures leads to vulgarity; to paint only high buildings leads to confusion. He who paints only stones exposes the bones, while he who paints only the soil makes too much flesh.

Brush-work which is not finished and completed is called scattered and careless; it expresses no real ideas. Ink and colour which are not moist and shining are called dry and arid. They express no living thoughts.

Water which does not flow and murmur may be called dead water. Clouds which are not alive may be called frozen clouds. Mountains on which the clear and the dark parts are not distinguished have no light and shade, while mountains which are not partly visible and partly invisible have no mist and vapours.

* * *

Mountains are big things; their shapes may be high and lofty, proud and arrogant, dignified and generous; they may be as if seated with legs spread out or with legs crossed. They may be massive and thick, bold and brave; they may reveal a living spirit; and be majestic and strong. They may be as if looking around or bowing in salutation. They may have a cover on the top and a pedestal beneath, a support in front and something to lean on at the back. They may be looking down as if observing something, or as if marching along and giving directions. Such are the aspects and the grandeur of the mountains.

Water is a living thing; its appearance may be quiet and deep, gentle and smooth. It may be like the big ocean, or it may be winding and curving. It may be oily and glossy, or splashing and bubbling, dashing like arrows. It may come from many springs and be flowing far away. It may form waterfalls reaching up to the skies and rushing down into the earth; it may have peaceful fishermen and a joyful vegetation (on its banks). It may bring along mist and clouds which make it look beautiful and attractive. It may form shining streams in the valleys and be dazzlingly bright. Such are the aspects of the life of water.

The watercourses are the arteries of the mountains, grass and trees are their hair; mist and clouds give them their air of beauty. Therefore mountains must have waters to be alive, grass and trees to be beautiful, mist and clouds to be fine and alluring.

Water has the mountains as its face, pavilions and kiosks as its eyes and eyebrows, angling and fishing to give it animation. Therefore, when there is a mountain, water looks attractive; when there are pavilions and kiosks, it looks bright and pleasant, with fishing and angling, it looks wide and great. Such are the configurations of mountains and water.

Among mountains there are high ones and low ones. The high ones have their arteries below, their shoulders and thighs spread wide; their supporting feet are strong and broad. The peaks and cliffs stand close together as if linked into a continuous chain.

High mountains of such a kind are not solitary and not toppling. Low mountains have their arteries higher up; their tops are somewhat drooping, their necks and shoulders close together, their supporting roots big and strong, their piled up mounds are full and rounded; they reach far into the earth; nobody can measure their depth. Such are the low mountains. These may be called shallow and not scattered. But if a high mountain is solitary, its body seems concentrated, if the low mountain is slight, it has the air of being dispersed. Such are the styles of mountains and water.

Rocks form the bones of heaven and earth. They are precious and should be buried deep in the earth and not be disclosed on the surface. Water is the blood of heaven and earth; blood is precious and should circulate and not be frozen or obstructed.

Mountains without mist and clouds are like a spring without flowers and grass.

Mountains without clouds are not beautiful, without water not alluring; without paths they show no movement; without forests no life; without depth they seem shallow; without horizontal extension (in front), they seem too close by; without height and distance they seem too low.

With regard to mountains three distances may be perceived, i.e. one in looking from the foot towards the top which is called height; one looking from the front towards the back which is called depth; and one looking from a nearby one to a far off mountain which is called flat distance. The tone of the height dimension is clear and bright; the tone of the depth distance heavy and dark, while that of the horizontal distance may be either clear or dark. The height is boldly resolute; the depth is made up of layer beyond layer; the effect of horizontal distance is obtained by inserting misty lines which gradually disappear.

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Far off mountains have no wrinkles; far off water has no waves; far off men have no eyes; i.e. they have them, though they do not seem to do so.

* * *

HUA I

(Ideals or Motifs for Painting)

MEN OF the world think that pictures are made simply by moving the brush; they do not understand that painting is no easy matter. Chuang-tzu said: "The painter takes off his clothes and sits cross-legged" – a true statement about the painter's ways. The artist must nourish gentleness and cheerfulness in his heart; his ideas must be joyful and harmonious; as said,¹ if the heart becomes spontaneously honest and sincere to the utmost, then the various aspects of man's gladness and sorrow and of every other thing, be it pointed, oblique, bent or inclined, will appear naturally in his mind and be spontaneously brought out by his brush.

Ku K'ai-chih of the Chin dynasty constructed for himself a high building as a studio for painting; he was, indeed, a wise man of ancient times. If one does not act in this way (do so) the inspiration will soon be restrained, distracted, dulled or obstructed, and how could one then represent the real form of things in painting or express the emotions of men?

It is like a workman making a *ch'in* (table harp). He has found a *wu-t'ung* tree on Mount I-yang; his hands are skilled, his thoughts mysterious, his mind quite clear on the point, and so while the tree (living material) still stands with branches and leaves untouched, like Master Lei he sees the lute quite clearly before his eyes. But the man whose thoughts are troubled and whose body is worn out looks at the sharp chisels and knives and does not know where to begin. How could he accomplish the *Chiao-wei* lute² of the five notes and make its sounds reverberate with the clear wind and the running water? It is, indeed, as a man of former times said: a poem is a picture without form, a

¹ Li-chi, Chapt. Yüeh Chi. Couvreur, II, p. 103.

² *Chiao-wei* (scorched tail) alluding to a story of a lute made from a charred log of the *wu-t'ung* tree, which an enthusiast rescued for that purpose from the flames. Giles, *Dictionary*, 1317.

The man who made this famous lute, which produced sounds of unapproached beauty, was Ts'ai Yung of the later Han dynasty. Cf. Waley, *op. cit.*, 192.

picture a poem in form. Wise men have often discussed this (saying), and I have made it my teacher.

I have, therefore, in my leisure hours, looked through some poems of the Chin and T'ang periods and sometimes found among them excellent verses which express the things which are in man's heart, or the views which present themselves to his eyes.

But if I do not dwell in perfect harmony and am not seated peacefully at a bright window before a clean table burning a stick of incense to dispel all anxieties, fine verses and excellent ideas do not take shape; the inner mood and beauty of their meaning is not realized in my thoughts. How can it then be said that the principal thing in painting is easily reached?

Only when circumstances are ripe and the heart and hand responsive, will the horizontal and vertical strokes be true to measure, and (I seize the principles) on either hand, meeting everywhere with them like a fountain (from which they flow).¹ Then the people of the world will be moved and enabled to roughly grasp my intentions. Therefore I (Kuo Ssü) have recorded some of the beautiful verses by ancient poets which my father used to recite, and which contain excellent thoughts for painting.

(The author then quotes some verses of the T'ang and early part of the Sung dynasty, most of which may be read in Waley's translation.)

* * *

HUA CHÜEH

(Secrets or Methods of Painting)

WHENEVER YOU are planning to paint, you must first correlate the sky and the earth. This means that on a scroll which is one and a half feet wide, the upper part should be left for the sky, the lower part for the earth; between them one should establish one's ideas and spread the scenery. I have seen beginners of the present day hastily grasping the brush, and starting off in a light-hearted fashion. As

soon as they established an idea and were moved in their feelings, they smeared the whole canvas full. When looking at their overfilled paintings the eyes get choked, the effect is very unpleasant. How could such works obtain the admiration of hearts serene or move the feeling of the great ones?

In painting landscapes one should first attend to the great mountain which is called the master-peak. When the master-peak is fixed, one may proceed with the secondary mountains near and far, large and small. It dominates the whole region, that is why it is called the master-peak. It is like a ruler among his subjects, a master among servants.

In painting trees and stones attend first to the great pine-tree which may be called the clan-elder. When the idea of this clan-elder has been fixed, go on by doing the crevices and small plants, the creepers and the split rocks. It is called the clan-elder because it is the most conspicuous on the mountain, or like a noble man in a common crowd.

There are mountains covered with earth and mountains covered with stones. If mud-hills have stones, the trees are thin and tall. If stone-hills have mud, the trees are rich and luxuriant. There are trees growing on mountains and trees growing by water. The mountain trees, which grow in rich soil, are very tall pines. The water trees, which grow in slight soil, have many long shoots.

Among waters there is running water; among stones or cliffs there are coiled up ones. The water may form cascades; the stones may be strangely shaped. The waterfalls rush on the outskirts of the forest. The strange stones are like tigers squatting at the side of the road.

Among rains there is the rain which is on the point of falling and likewise the snow which is beginning to fall. There is the pouring rain and the heavy snowfall and also the clearing after rain and after snow. Among winds there is the hurricane.

¹ Cf. Mathews, *Chinese-English Dictionary*, Revised American ed., (1947), No. 1881, p. 274, quotation from Mencius, Book IV, II, Chapt. 14.

Among clouds there are those which are returning home. The storm-wind blows up the sand and moves the stones. The thin clouds are like stretched out white gauze.

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He who uses the brush should not be used by it, and he who uses the ink should not be used by the ink. Brush and ink are two superficial things, but how could those who do not know how to handle them accomplish anything really wonderful? The handling of the brush and the ink properly is not so difficult; you can do it as in calligraphy, which is of the same order as painting. Thus it has been told of Wang Yu-chün (Wang Hsi-chih) that he liked geese; the movement of their turning necks seemed to him like that of a man's wrist when he is handling the brush. This applies just as well to the use of the brush in painting. Therefore it is generally said that he who is good in calligraphy is mostly also good in painting, because in both arts the movement in the wrist (and the forearm) in using the brush must be unobstructed. Someone may ask what kind of ink should be used. To this my answer is: use either burnt ink, or ink which has been stored over night, or faded ink, or dust-ink; one kind of ink is not sufficient for achieving what you want."

(In the following, various mixtures of ink are described and their use in different parts of the pictures; also how colouristic effects may be obtained, etc. . . . These notes, as well as those concerning the various positions in which the brush may be kept, its "clinging", "pulling", "hitting", etc. . . . contain valuable advice for the technical student, but they do not mean very much to people with no practical experience in the handling of the Chinese brush and ink.)

The importance of Kuo Hsi's discussion does not depend on any startling originality in his ideas. On the contrary; his points of view are practically the same as those of all the great landscape painters of the Five Dynasties and the Early Sung period. He

explains what many excellent artists had practised and what he himself had tried to convey in pictorial form, and casts a kind of flood-light on the road of Chinese landscape-painting as far as it had been opened up as yet. This gives his discourse a broad general interest.

The fundamental point of view refers to the study of something more than the objective appearance of things, it concerns the communion with the soul of Nature, an aesthetic endeavour or ideal which Kuo Hsi develops in a more complete and rational way than any of his predecessors and in terms of his own. The main parts of this treatise have a tone of personal experience which adds a great deal to their importance.

His remarks may be said to fall into two different classes; *i.e.* the advice given to his son (and to other students of painting) and, on the other hand, descriptive or explanatory statements for the general public, which are furthermore supplemented by Kuo Ssü. The former may be more important from an artistic point of view, but the latter lend a more entertaining historical tone to the discussion. When he suggests that the pictures should represent places where wise and virtuous men like to dwell or to idle and that they should do it so that one actually feels as if one were in the woods or by the rivers without stepping out of the house, he places himself in line with the long row of Chinese scholars and philosophers who have advocated the greatness of painting on the ground of its power to substitute spiritual experience for objective reality.

Kuo Hsi's way of expounding this demand is, however, remarkably free from the intellectual dross of more scholastic writers, and animated by the imaginative power that also runs through his somewhat detailed observations on nature. He is intrinsically a painter rather than a philosopher. The eclectic manner of study which he recommends was at the time a generally accepted approach among painters and amateurs. A good painter should master the essential technical experience of his

predecessors. His own method should be the result of wide experience and a thorough study based on classical models. Such was the main road; it may have led to an over-production of empty repetitions, but out of this mass grew the masterpieces created by the men who, like Kuo Hsi, had followed it to the goal and reached freedom.

Among the observations that Kuo Hsi offers on the appearances and phenomena of nature, are several which indicate a perfect realization of the importance of space and aerial perspective, as also may be observed in his pictures. A good part of his comment is devoted to this subject and to the methods by which effects of space and distance, or atmosphere and light-effects at different seasons and hours of the day, should be rendered. He dwells on the sweeping mist that covers portions of the mountains, on the watercourses that appear and disappear, on clouds and rain, and on the ever changing phenomena that make the beholder realize that he stands in front of a revelation of a great mystery – a section of infinite life.

In describing these things as well as some of the most significant forms of natural scenery, such as the majestic mountain which is enthroned like an emperor, the master-pine which is the leader among the trees, the stones which are like squatting tigers at the road-side, the vegetation which forms the hair of the mountains, the home-going clouds, etc. . . . , Kuo Hsi does it in terms which suggest that he considers these manifestations like animate organisms, not to say human beings. They all take active parts in the great drama which is unrolled before the painter's eye – act after act, scene after scene at the various seasons, in the morning and in the evening, day and night. Everything in nature is co-operating in this grand drama, also the human beings, who are said to accord themselves by their appearance, their expressions and actions, to the seasons and the changing moods of the days.

Man is subject to the rhythmic changes or pulsations of Nature, just as much as all other creatures or manifestations of its inherent forces;

they are all pervaded by the same life-breath, the same fundamental consciousness in various degrees of visible realization. The essential problem for the painter is to reveal or release this with the means at his disposal. Kuo Hsi implies it in his aesthetic and technical advice to his son, while other contemporary critics convey it more explicitly, as for instance T'eng Ch'ün, who wrote in *Hua Chi*: "Innumerable things with all their details may be rendered through the intelligent use of the brush, but there is only one way in which their character can be fully expressed. What is it? It is the transmitting of the spirit. People think that men alone have spirit (soul); they do not realize that everything is endowed with soul (spirit). Thus Kuo Jo-hsü scorned the works of common men; he said that though they were called paintings, they were not painting (as an art). Therefore the manner of painting which transmits the breath of life (ch'i-yün) and movement is the foremost."

In order to do it, to reach this hidden secret or essential character of ever-changing forms and appearances, the painter must be in perfect harmony with the aims and ways of Nature; he must detach himself from all distracting influences (whether psychological or material) and reach the emptiness or tranquillity of mind in which glimmers of truth may be perceived, as the light of distant stars mirrored in a dark well.

He cannot do it in a hurry, nor while the mind is preoccupied with speculative thoughts, because then the mental and physical instruments do not respond instantly to the creative impetus and the work becomes weak or dead. The painter must choose the right moment from a subjective as well as an objective view-point and start with the utmost decision and full command of all his means and faculties as if on the point of guarding against an enemy who tries to overpower him. Kuo Ssü gives a vivid picture of the severity of the task, the mental and spiritual energy needed to surmount all obstructions, and makes us realize that the final picture, even if it has the appearance of being thrown off lightly, is the result of a long and repeated

struggle not only in the technical field but also in the sphere of the painter's personal life and character.

Chuang-tzū's words: "the painter takes off his clothes and sits cross-legged" are quoted as an illustration to the proper mental attitude necessary

for creative activity, and the writer might well have added another saying by the same Sage to make his meaning clear: "When the mind is in repose, it becomes the mirror of the universe, the speculum of all creation".

Bibliography

TO VOLUMES I-II

This Bibliography contains only such books and articles as have been used in the composition of the historical text of vols. I-II. Publications which have served for the establishment of the Annotated Lists are recorded in the special Bibliography at the head of the Lists. The Chinese and Japanese literature on the various historical, philosophical, religious and artistic topics discussed in these volumes are, indeed, far more extensive than appears from the following list of books, but it would have led us beyond the limits of this summary work on the history of painting to include here more detailed bibliographi-

cal references. A few such indications are, however, inserted in footnotes to the text, while other supplementary bibliographical information may be found in books of a more specialized character such as William R. B. Acker's, *Some T'ang and Pre-T'ang Texts on Chinese Painting* and Alexander C. Soper's *Kuo Jo-hsi's Experiences in Painting*.

The Chinese and Japanese books are as far as possible arranged in the chronological order of their publication, whereas the books in foreign languages are listed in the usual alphabetical order.

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Li Ssü-chên 李嗣真, *Hsü hua-p'in lu* 續畫品錄 (c.689). Edit. as above. The present text was probably made up in the South Sung period as a substitute for the original, which is lost.

P'ei Hsiao-yüan 裴孝源, *Chên-kuan kung-ssü hua shih* 貞觀公私畫史 (c.650). Record of paintings existing in imperial and private collections in the Chên-kuan era. Edit. Wang-shih hua-yüan.

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Chang Yen-yüan 張彥遠, *Li-tai ming-hua chi* 歷代名畫記 (finished 847). Edit. Chin-tai pi-shu and Wang-shih hua-yüan. Cf. Acker's translation of Chapters I, II and III in *op. cit.*

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